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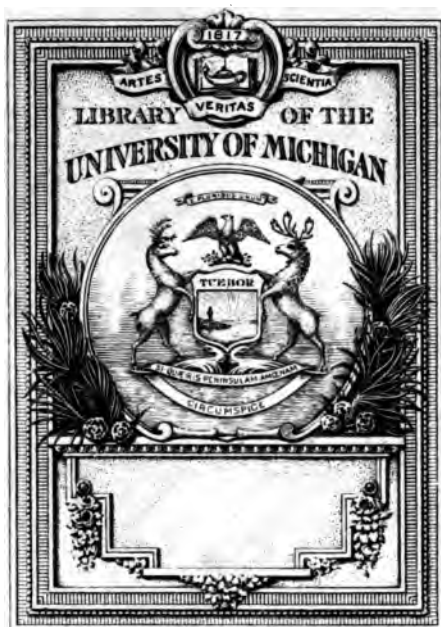
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THE NOVELS OF
BJÖRNSTJERNE BJÖRNSSON

Edited by EDMUND GOSSE

VOLUME X

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WILLIAM HEINEMANN

21 Bedford Street, W.C.

IN GOD'S WAY

A NOVEL

BY

BJÖRNSTJERNE BJÖRNSEN

Translated from the Norwegian by

ELIZABETH CARMICHAEL

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WILLIAM HEINEMANN

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MANHOOD

III

THE next morning they were awakened by a loud and continued noise. When they could collect their thoughts they knew it was the church bells ringing for service ; they had slept very late, but then they had worked till three o'clock, that is to say, until broad daylight.

Kallem was out of bed in a second, and into the bath-room, next door, where he took a tremendous shower-bath ; evidently, the former doctor had had a taste for that kind of thing ! And hardly was he half dressed before he ran out on to the balcony to look at the view. He shouted in to Ragni to take her shower-bath too, and dress herself and come out to look at it ; but she had felt the water so fearfully cold yesterday, she lay there with wide-open eyes, debating as to whether she should shirk it or really venture to take it. She made up her mind to shirk, so she quickly appeared at his side in a very pretty dressing-gown, which she had thrown round her. But although she looked so sweetly at him, and eagerly began praising the view and the exquisite

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day, he did not forget the shower-bath. Yesterday she had solemnly promised that she would begin the very first morning ; susceptible to cold as she was, she must look upon a shower-bath as her daily bread, especially up here, where the change from heat to cold was so very sudden. Therefore——! She made the most piteous face, and tried to laugh it off ; but he pointed to the shower-bath—would she really break her promise ? If she broke it now, this first time, she would break it too often later on. She kissed him and said he was cruel ; he kissed her and said she was sweet ; but how about the shower-bath ? So she darted in and undid her dressing-gown, as though she meant to take the bath, but popped into bed instead. When he came in, she pulled the clothes over her head ; but without more ado he took up the blanket and its contents, and carried it to the door ; but she begged and implored him to let her off, and seemed so frightened that he went back with his burden. She put her arms round him and dragged him down to her ; she kissed him and whispered to him, and with her sweet caresses completely defeated his logic.

The bells went on ringing and ringing, carriages drove past away from the town. Hardly had one gone by before another came. The door was open ; every time the bells stopped preparatory to the well-known three peals, they could hear the flies buzzing about the room, and the birds outside. They also heard the puffing of a little steamer out on the lake ; they had seen

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it cut across from the other coast, probably with tourists. There must be some festivity going on somewhere to account for the way people were streaming in.

There was a light south-westerly breeze, filling the room each time with sweet scents; it poured in from the fields and trees. Through the clanging of the bells one could hear it whispering and sighing, the air seemed full of sounds.

Shortly after, they again stood on the balcony and watched the people going to church; well-packed carriages drove constantly past the church and continued upwards. The steamer came quite close; now the train whistled too. They both caught sight of two swallows that were evidently playing with their own shadows in the sand outside the veranda. They flew above and past each other, the shadows on the sand imitating each swoop; the birds wore down close to the sand and then a little way above; whenever they flew too high and the shadows disappeared, they darted down again to find them. She whispered to him that next year they would put out boxes for them to build in.

They finished dressing and went down to lunch. Sören Pedersen and his wife had arrived some time ago, and had their meal; they were now hard at work.

Then they heard that every one was bound for the neighbouring parish, where the clergyman, Pastor Meek, was to celebrate his fifty years' jubilee, and to preach a farewell sermon. Foot passengers had been on the go all the morning;

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now came those in carriages ; and a steamer full of people from the opposite coast. Meek had had this same living all these fifty years—"a truly delightful man."

Kallem and Ragni were lunching in the big room ; but their lunch was interrupted by some one knocking, and in came a thin, elderly man, smiling and noiseless, with horn spectacles on his nose ; this was Dr. Kent, who was temporary manager of the hospital ; he came from there just now. They both got up. He had a soft, pleasant voice, and a knowing smile accompanied all he said. He sat down at a little distance from them while they went on with their lunch, and gave a short account of the patients over at the "establishment," and of the sanitary state of both town and country. He answered dryly and briefly all questions as to those functionaries Kallem would have to call upon, as to the leaders in town and parish matters, and those of the local government board he ought to know. The purest business matters became pleasant when spoken of by Dr. Kent. When his gig came to the door—he was going on his rounds out in the country—Kallem asked leave to drive with him ; but Ragni at once did the same too. So they hired a larger carriage and soon they were all three seated in it. Just as they were starting, Ragni remembered that the piano wanted tuning slightly, and she asked Sören Pedersen if he knew any one who could tune at any rate for the present ? Yes, there was Kristen Larssen.

So the drive began with an account of Kristen

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Larssen. Kent told them he was born up in one of the worst and most remote districts, and had been punished by the law for some trifling slip—he thought it was because he had called a tune he played, “the forgiveness of sins.” Kristen Larsen was an inventor too; there was a knitting machine much in use now which was his invention, and various kinds of tools. He was a cold man—cold as iron in the winter time. Sören Pederson and his wife were the only people he had anything to do with. And who were those two? He knew nothing about their “antecedentia;” she was from these parts, he was from Funen. They were both clever at their work; but people soon found out that they drank. The minister tried to correct this failing; he had grown attached to them from the time they had worked for him in his new house. Strange to say, his efforts were crowned with success; not only did they give up drink, but Sören became a most zealous temperance man and very religious; at last he knew the Bible by heart. It was literally true, he knew it by heart! He often told them how it was his greatest delight to make Aase hear him, and in some few small assemblies, he would repeat by heart whole chapters out of the Bible, while his hearers sat and followed attentively. The minister put his name down to get him into a Bible school, and he had no higher wish than to belong to it, but he expected Aase to be taken in too. As they did not agree to this, he gave up the Bible class and became unsteady again in everything.

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He then became acquainted with that Jack of all trades, Kristen Larssen, who had just settled in the town. Kristen Larssen had heard about Sören Pedersen's powers of learning by heart, and tried to find out the mechanism of it. But there was none; the whole thing was a gift of God's mercy; all things were possible for God.

That is in the book of Matthew, answered Kristen Larssen; but in the book of Judges it is written that the Lord was with Judah, but Judah could not make the enemy flee from the valley, because they had chariots of iron.

The worthy Sören Pedersen was much shocked that the God of the Jews had not gained the victory over the chariots of iron.

In the same book of Moses, continued Kristen Larssen, it is written, "Thou shalt not kill," but it is written too that the Lord constantly gave orders to kill. So there are contradictions.

This was altogether new to Sören Pedersen, and yet he knew his Bible by heart. He was anxious to know the rights of it, and at every religious meeting he demanded explanations. At last he had no less than a hundred contradictory questions to inquire into; it was no longer possible to keep the peace. Half of them went into fits of laughter, the other half got angry. It ended by his being turned out of the meetings, both he and Aase. "I don't know," said Dr. Kent, "whether I may tell you how your brother-in-law, with his own hands, turned out Sören Pederson and his wife Aase—out of the meeting-house! They had sat themselves down there

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before any one else, and they would not move. Your brother-in-law is very strong, but Sören Pederson held on, until it struck the minister that he would take Aase first, and then they both pulled away at her as if she were a stick of firewood."

Kallem and Ragni roared with laughter at this.

"I myself have witnessed one of the encounters," said Dr. Kent. "The minister was holding an examination at the school; I am one of the school committee. Sören Pederson and his wife, Aase, were present, and every one suspected there would be mischief. 'God cannot lie,' said the minister. Then Sören Pederson rose up and said: 'It is written, that the Lord gave unto the prophets a spirit of lying.' Again Sören Pederson had to depart."

The scenery through which they were driving, as they listened to all these amusing anecdotes, was an elevated, sunny plain divided by large and small ridges of woodland—or contrariwise, a wood divided by cultivated fields. The farms were all well built, the fields fertile, the road varied, first through woods, across fields, hills, and undulating over brooks and streams. There were heaps of stones in the most unexpected places, and paths and roads in all directions. Any one coming from the prairies of America and the regularity of Central Europe, would be put in good spirits by all this variety. The same dazzling sunshine as yesterday, the same strong scent from meadow and wood—and such a display

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of flowers, such singing of birds ; hark, that was the cuckoo !

It was not long till midsummer's day, and the vegetation was thereafter ; Ragni was enchanted with the luxuriance of it all. Botany was her favourite branch of study, and the contrast between the flora she had studied, and that of the country here, interested her greatly. She asked if there were many places in Norway where barberry and columbine grew wild ? Dr. Kent thought that they must have been brought into the country a long time ago ; probably by the monks from the cloister down yonder.

As they passed again from the meadow into a narrow strip of wood, principally fir-trees, she saw the linnæa for the third time ; she could not sit still in the carriage any longer ; they all got out.

It had just begun to open its bell-shaped pink flowers ; its spicy fragrance filled the wood ; Ragni at once began her little whisperings to it ; if only she were allowed to be alone now—for six years they had not seen each other, or, indeed, as it was spring when she started, it was six years and a half. She gathered and lifted up some of them, and her eyes fell on a "pyrola uniflora" bending low in melancholy solitude ; Kallem had just found the same ; she asked him what it was called in Norwegian ? He asked Kent if it was not St. Olaf's candlestick—he asked as an apothecary, and received an answer from a herbarium.

Ragni went further and further away from them

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both. The scent of the flower as she gathered it seemed to attract her still further in ; it was sent to entice her on. So she went further, but kept a little behind—away from the others. She heard them talking ; one hears so distinctly in the wood ; she heard too a pair of startled birds. But here at hand was nothing but the rustling of her own footstep through the grass and moss. She found one single wood-sorrel in flower, a last loiterer. It looked so out of sorts midst all its clover-like leaves ; did it know its companions had left it ?

The flowers all told her to go on ; indeed, both the linnæa, and the holy candlestick, and the wood-sorrel drew her on ; the latter had stood so long waiting on purpose for that. And there was Ragni—in a large family gathering of star-flowers ; they were all waiting to see her ; no one else had trodden that way this year. Ragni knelt down among them and told them how she had come from so very far away, she told it all in flower-fashion, without words ; speech was not necessary between them. How she had opened one door after the other to find her way back to Norway ; each time she had opened one, there had been another beyond. . . . until at last she was with them all. As soon as she saw the linnæa she knew that she had reached the end. This was the innermost of all. All great dangers from outside, direct from the sea, all that strength and cruelty, variable and busy, all this splendour and alarm, all impels us further and further in ; right in here we must come to understand that everything does not fall in a thousand

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pieces. It is they who are in there who can control all.

"We have been waiting for you too. Here we keep the innermost secret."

"Oh, tell it to me!"

"Be kind to others."

"Indeed, I think that is the only thing I have a talent for. But if the others will not——"

"Let the others be as they will; but be you kind."

Then she understood, because she had gone so deep in. She understood now what had the greatest strength. The star-flowers.

"Ragni," shouted Kallem, in the distance, the wood resounded with his clear voice. "Yes!" Some of the family must go with her, she gathered them and took them up.

Then she hastened back again nearer to the road. On the edge of the wood stood an "actea" —it seemed to stand there just to show the way in, if she had got out of the carriage there. Now it wished to join the party. And just by the road, well hidden under the bank, was a whole party of lilies of the valley; where could her eyes have been? They knew well enough where she came from, for they, too, had been posted as sentinels to show the way in. They saw and understood one another directly; but that is always the way amongst those of the same family. Some of them must go with her too.

"Ragni!" shouted Kallem.

"Yes, yes!" and she came out on to the road and saw how far behind she was.

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The two men were standing by the carriage, talking ; they were on the top of the bank, and Kallem's tall figure and the other's little slight one stood out clearly defined. Both of them had their hands full. As she hurried toward them she could hear Kallem discoursing ; it was on a branch of black alder which he swung as he stood there ; he repeated in German, a German botanist's delight over this stately poison-bearer which he had come across in Norway. Dr. Kent presented her with a "polygala anara ;" he knew that the little blue flower would be new to her coming from America. She thanked him warmly. They got into the carriage and began at once arranging their treasures, and begged Ragni to choose what she liked ; they had gone through a small bog ; Kent had the flower of a bog-fir fastened in his coat, and they had both gathered everything, down to the very buttercup, "that wild beast," said Ragni ; she wouldn't have it ; it was so "muddy" too.

"You are æsthetic in everything," said Kallem. She shot a glance at him, sweet as the scent of her flowers.

"Do you notice that we are quite alone on the road ?" remarked Dr. Kent ; he told them that every one was at church, as old Pastor Meek was to preach a farewell sermon on this his fifty years' jubilee day. When he was twenty years old he had become curate to his own father—that was in those times—and he had inherited the living. He was now seventy years old, and was going to start on a journey abroad with his granddaugh-

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ter. He must be a strong man? Yes, and led a healthy life; always on the move, always busy. He was the go-between here. Go-between? Yes, each district must have one to intercede for science and for practical matters. Much of the prosperity of this district proceeds from him and has been passed on to others. Then he is popular? The most popular man of the neighbourhood. How is he "in the pulpit"? "Well, he has stood there now fifty years and related anecdotes. At first this was made fun of, and there were some who thought it profanation; now there are several who have followed his example."

"What sort of anecdotes are they?"

The last one that Dr. Kent had heard was about a woman who had been thirty years in prison in St. Louis, in America, and who, although she was seventy years old, was the worst of all the prisoners. Once the prisoners had to be moved to another prison which was under the management of a woman who was a Quaker. The old woman refused to be moved; she resisted with all her strength, and at last they had to tie her in a chair and carry her away. As they arrived with her, the woman who had the management of the prison stood in the doorway and received the furious old creature. "Unloose her!" she said. "But is it safe?" "Unloose her!" And they did so. As soon as the old woman was unbound, her new superintendent bent down over her, put her arm round her neck, and gave her a kiss of welcome as from one sister to another. Then the old woman fell

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on her knees and asked: "Do you really believe that there is some good in me?" From that time she invariably was quite obedient.

Here Kent and Kallem left the carriage; they had to turn up to a peasant's house a little way back from the road. There was a black dog lying in front of the gallery; he looked at the carriage and barked; but only once or twice, then he went down a few steps toward them, sniffed at them all round, and then went back and lay down.

There was no one else to be seen. The driver turned the horses and drove to one side. The two doctors went in to the patient, and Ragni walked up and down the yard. Through the window she could see an old man in bed and his old wife sitting beside him; she sang to him with trembling voice, and did not stop even when the door was opened behind her.

Ragni looked about her in the yard; then went and sat down on the store-house steps.

Nothing has such a quieting influence on one as a peasant's farm at rest. Not even the wood, for there is always a rustle or sound of something, and one must be on the look-out both sitting or lying down; nor yet the sea when it is quiet, for it never can be perfectly at rest; nor the meadow, for that swarms with life and we can see it too around us. But a peasant's farm which is not at work—the hens going about scratching and picking up food, make you feel comfortable, the dog lying down, and the cat that creeps stealthily a few paces, stops, then creeps on again, and the

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ploughs leaning up against the harrows, the grinding-stones standing dry, the carts with shafts down, the dinner bell silent ; everything that has been at work rests like you, and that which still moves about only adds to the general peace. Should you see a pig in the distance rooting up the ground, it is entirely occupied with that ; or a horse champing and whisking away flies, that is its pleasure ; should the little birds come and chirp their greeting to you, it increases the light-heartedness which is the foundation of all peace.

Suddenly, in the midst of this peaceful rest, the fright from that meeting with Josephine came over her. Was there nothing in her conscience that could accuse her ? No, a thousand times, no ! Not even her sister's children ? No, for she could not even have lived for them under such circumstances. What then ? What had she done ? She had loved him. And why should she not do so ?

The quiet was over ; she went up above the house and found there two kinds of "orobus" not very far apart, first of all the bird-pea out on the meadow, and then one other in a cup with petals ; she could not remember the name of the latter. As she went down the path again she found a splendid cock's-comb and a third kind of violet ; the others had already given her two kinds. What flowers there were ! Look there ! The loveliest veronica ; ah, the head fell ; but there is another, that will keep. Afterwards she heard that the fragile flower is called here "man's faith."

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Again she went in to the farm-yard ; through the window of the bed-room she saw Kallem with his ear pressed to the old man's chest. Dr. Kent soon came out and the wife with him ; he screamed at her, but she heard almost nothing. Kallem looked so tall standing there in the door, now he came to join her. How she loved him.

They were sitting together in the evening in the doctor's work-room ; it was now all arranged as it was to be, with the exception of the books. Sören Pedersen, followed by his wife Aase, came in from the passage through the dining-room ; he looked cunning, she looked alarmed ; they announced that the minister and his wife were just coming in at the gate !

Kallem saw that Ragni turned pale. As the others were present, however, he said nothing but : "Come along !" went into the drawing-room, and from thence out in the passage to receive them.

The meeting was a stiff one. The minister begged they would excuse their coming so late, but it was the most convenient time for him, he had just come from evening service. They only came in to ask if Kallem and his wife would go home with them to supper ? On Sundays a clergyman is seldom his own master before the evening.

His voice had still a little of the solemnity of a sermon in it, and there was a reflection of church in both countenance and manner. Josephine stood and looked about her, in which her husband speedily followed her example.

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He thought it all very snug and cosy, and the piano was a "splendid piece of furniture." As they were looking at it, Josephine opened her lips for the first time, and turning to Ragni, said quickly: "I hear you play so beautifully!"

"Oh——"

"Won't you play something for us?" The minister added: "Please do!"

Ragni looked at her husband—as one who is drowning looks for help. "Ragni requires to be in the proper mood to be able to play," said he.

"Very likely she is tired," said the minister, excusing her; they sat down, the minister and Kallem opposite each other, Josephine on one side; Ragni remained standing.

"Of course you must both of you be tired," continued the minister; "you have been travelling now for so long, and then arranging the house here; I heard from Dr. Kent that you had very nearly finished?"

Yes, so they were; but had had capital help from Sören Pedersen and his wife Aase. Ragni was afraid that those two were still in the dining-room, and hurried in to see; but they were gone, and were not in the doctor's room either.

The minister's face had assumed quite a fatherly expression. "We have been obliged to employ Sören Pedersen and his wife because the people we otherwise employ were not at liberty. But one ought not to give work to that kind of people."

"Indeed?"

"Oh, they are good workers; but they drink

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up everything they earn, and then stay away from their work for days; it was the same here too. They scandalise the whole congregation."

"Dear me, that's a pity."

In passing Kallem, Ragni stroked his head with her hand; she had to fetch something off the piano. The minister was nothing abashed by the doctor's flighty tone.

"We have striven to do what we could for them both—yes, for she drinks just as much as he does. You would be astonished if you heard how kind every one has been to them. But all in vain, and worse than in vain. But I will not go further into that story." He looked at his wife, who sat there in her tight-fitting dress, stiff and impenetrable, a piece of perfection from top to toe. Her eyes so well trained that they saw everything without appearing to see. She would have liked Kallem to have come and spoken to her. Ragni stood farther back, unseen by the others, but directly opposite him.

"It is provoking," he said, "that the former doctor built his house so close to the hospital. It is not pleasant to have strangers so near one."

"Yes, but the old man built it for his brother-in-law. And now he is dead too."

"So I hear; if I could afford to sink more money in houses, I would buy this, although I should have no use for it."

Josephine turned half round, doubtless to see if Ragni still stood there. "I don't think it is for sale," said she; "I know the heirs." Then there was a pause for a little while.

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The minister started a new subject ; that same morning he had been reading in the *Morgenblad* about the general state of insecurity all over America. He spoke like one who knew all about it, and turned continually to his wife ; if he did look at the others—for instance at Ragni, who had just come back from America—it was merely a passing glance ; he invariably returned to his wife.

Pastor Tuft was a stately, good-looking man, especially as a certain degree of stoutness had filled in his bony face ; he had a pleasant voice, and his Melancthon eyes sparkled and glistened at all that was said. His speech and manners were, if anything, persuasive ; but one felt his power under cover of all his mildness.

His wife quite unexpectedly made an upward movement with her head. "Of course it must be time to be going now," said he, as he rose from his seat ; "I am quite forgetting myself. Well—will you go with us ?"

Josephine got up too, so did Kallem. But he, too, had a wife who could give glances, warning and imploring.

"Thanks, but we are both tired, we will put it off till another time."

And so they accompanied the others to the door. Kallem then went to the window and looked out after them as they walked away, both so tall and strong-looking. Soon they had left the church behind them ; every one who met them greeted them most respectfully. He stood on there even after they were out of sight. He walked up and

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down the room a few times, then he turned a somersault (made a wheel on his hands). "Go and fetch Sören Pedersen and his wife Aase to me!"—but he went himself. They were not to be found anywhere; Sigrid told him they had gone directly the minister and his wife came. "Hang it all, now you'll see they are making themselves tipsy! Just go down to them and invite them to come to supper with us. Say we are quite alone." Off went the girl; Kallem shouted out after her: "Insist upon their coming, whether they want to or not."

"Now listen to me, Mr. saddler!" said the doctor, when they both appeared in the parlour again, the wife behind the husband; "listen to me. The minister says that you drink, Pedersen, both you and your wife, and that he cannot get you to give it up?"

"The minister speaks the truth."

"But it is a dreadful disease, Pedersen."

"Oh, yes—in the long run."

"Will you leave it to me to cure you?"

"Oh, most willingly, doctor! but seriously, now; will it take a long time?"

"Two minutes."

"Two minutes?" He smiled; but before the smile had vanished, Kallem was upon him with his eyes, which had a strange and startling expression. The saddler changed colour, he retreated a few steps. The doctor followed and told him to sit down. He did it without hesitation. "Look at me!" Aase was fit to faint. "Sit down, you too!" said the doctor over his

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shoulder to her, and she collapsed into a chair. Yesterday already the doctor had seen what kind of people he had to do with; it did *not* take two minutes, before Sören Pedersen was completely mesmerised and his wife Aase too, though she had only been looking on. The doctor commanded them to open their eyes again; they both did so at once. "Now listen here, Sören Pedersen! You just leave off drinking brandy or spirits in any shape or form whatever; no more wine either, nor strong beer—not for one whole month. Do you hear? When that month is past—it is now half-past six—you come here to me on the stroke of the hour. And you too, Aase. Every time he wants to drink, you must cry out. And afterwards you can sing, both of you."

"But we can't sing."

"You will sing all the same."

IV

JOSEPHINE left the town, she took her boy with her to the west country, to have some sea-bathing ; the minister was soon to follow them, he had not had a holiday since he had taken holy orders. He had come here as curate, directly after his examination, and had so completely gained the goodwill of his congregation, that when, two years ago, the town and country parishes were separated, the congregation voted unanimously for him, and he got the living. He had worked very hard for about six years ; he much required a little rest. Josephine went up to her brother's house one day when he was not at home, she announced that she was about to travel, said good-bye, and left a greeting for her brother.

Ragni understood at once that this journey had simply been arranged so as to escape the necessity of introducing her into society ; they would not help to smoothen her path. She did not mention it to the unsuspecting Kallem. He soon forgot the whole affair, for he got such an amount of work to do. As Kent wished to go abroad, Kallem would have to take both their practices, in consideration of his having attended to the hospital before Kallem's arrival. The third doctor who belonged to the place was a young military surgeon, he was

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now at the manœuvres. His name was Arentz ; he was possessed of a remarkably broad, powerful chest. Kallem recognised, by the accuracy of his knowledge, the very words of the books he had studied from ; at first he had great difficulty in not calling him Niemeyer, but he admired his upright and honourable character. When Kallem found that this life passed on highways and streets was becoming quite unbearable to him, he thought of asking Arentz to help him ; if he wished to become an independent man, he must arrange things very differently.

Ragni saw him gulp his food down in the middle of the day and return home in the evening. Sometimes he sat on the veranda with her for a while, or took a turn arm in arm in the garden, or helped her if there was anything she was busy with ; but seldom—as he had to go in to his books. A great change took place, however, when his colleague returned ; his only thought was that of regaining lost time, so now he was a fixture in the laboratory or office. Ragni very soon installed herself in this sanctum ; she got her own chair, her own book-shelf ; in fact, the office became the sitting-room.

They each read their own book by the hour, scarcely exchanging ten words. He had got into a long, self-engrossing study, and had no idea what he looked like when he, at intervals during his reading, stretched full length on the sofa, silently gazing at her ; or, as was generally the case, stood looking out of the windows. If he did move away a few steps, it would only be to return

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again at once to his old place at the window. He declared that there was no place where he could think with so much ease as there; this was an inheritance from his father.

He was much attached to his home, and seldom returned to it without a grateful feeling, and went about as happy and lighthearted as a bird. After dinner he was very fond of listening to music; but did not always as much as remark what Ragni was playing.

But she? Each day she bound herself faster and faster to the animate and inanimate things of her home. She again called him her "white pasha," her piano "a fairy tale." "Now for a fairy tale!" she said, when she felt inclined to play, and soon taught him to do the same. She called their bedroom, "amongst the stars." The pigeons which were given her at Whitsuntide, she called "her Whitsuntide-lilies;" Sigrid she called "the seven-armed woman." When she and Kallem were sitting reading in the office, she felt as if they were out sailing, each in their own boat, each to their own country. "Shall we go in and have a sail?" was what she called it.

He had discovered by her letters from America how fond she was of using figurative language: "We are each working slowly toward each other as opposite ends of a tunnel through the world," she wrote in one of her letters, and always kept returning to the subject of the tunnel; at last "they had reached so near to one another that she could hear him speak!" About the steamers, "that swim above," passing each other with their

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letters, she wrote that "the desire of the one attracted the other after it."

One evening that they were sitting on the veranda (it was raining, but they were protected by the projecting roof), she said: "A house like this should have a head."

"A head?"

"Yes, a head between the wings as every worthy hen has."

"Oh, that's what you mean, is it?"

"I always feel as if I were under a pair of wings, being hatched."

"Tell me how it is that you did not use biblical figures of speech in your youth?"

"Because I had a father who taught me what the origin of everything was from my tenth year; plants, animals, and people all belong to one family—that was a doctrine that I loved! After that I got a stepfather who was a clergyman, and insisted that the earth and human beings had been created perfect from the beginning, and that everything was made for the use of man; but I did not believe it. My own father was a quiet, delicate man, I loved him dearly; I was afraid of my stepfather, he was such a strong, violent man."

Kallem asked her to give him a description of her childhood and education, but she answered decidedly, no.

Kristen Larssen had got work to do at the doctor's, he had arranged his laboratory and put up the ventilators, &c. Kallem had never had

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anything to do with a more silent, suspicious man ; but neither with a more clever one. He came one Sunday morning in the beginning of August, arrayed in his best clothes, a long-tailed brown cloth coat, with extraordinarily tight sleeves, an old rusty waistcoat, much too short, and a pair of grey trousers made of the so-called English leather. He went about bare-headed, as a rule ; but on grand occasions he carried a hat in his hand ; he could not bear anything on his head, unless the weather were fearfully cold. There he stood in the office, tall, thin, with closely-cropped hair, well-scrubbed face with black stubby beard. His whole appearance was lightened up by a white collar spread over a red-striped scarf. The doctor asked him to sit down, and inquired what was the matter with him. His answer was—first an inquiring glance, and then that he had not complained of his health.

Kallem remarked by the answer he had just given him, that it was not easy to tell him what he wanted ; but he thought to himself : Now, my friend, you may be content.

At last he said that he knew that "the doctor's wife" had been five or six years in America ; and that perhaps she might have some English books to lend him. As he had taught himself a little English, perhaps she would tell him how to proceed further.

Was he thinking of emigrating ? Oh, that would not be freedom ; "to go and be a slave for the Norwegians . . . over there too ; no, I don't feel drawn toward that."

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"How old are you ?"

"About forty, or rather more."

He looked over fifty.

"I daresay my wife would with pleasure teach you English, Larssen, may be in the evenings."

No, he would not hear of that on any account. Kallem, however, explained to him that pronunciation must be learned by ear ; Ragni happened to come in at that moment, Kallem told her that if Kristen Larssen knew English, it would be like giving him a pair of wings. She blushed, for it was not the first time that her husband had given her some tiresome work to do ; of course, he thought she had not sufficient occupation. She, however, would have preferred not to agree. But as she stood looking at Kristen Larssen, she remembered that her husband had never met a cleverer man ; she began to feel a certain amount of compassion for him. He was studying an English book at that moment, and could barely understand what it was about. She not only proposed to help him, but tried to persuade him to accept her proffered help. On that very same afternoon, about five o'clock, they began ; they sat spelling through a very easy book. When Kallem came home he found them with their heads close together, poring over the same book, the one black and rugged, the other small and well-formed with reddish hair ; the one a stiff, grubby face with furrows and wrinkles ; the other possessed warm bright eyes and dazzling colouring, and was full of spirit. She held her handkerchief to her mouth, it was evidently a struggle for her to

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sit beside him at all. Kallem then remembered that he himself had remarked that Kristen Larssen's breath was not of the sweetest. Kallem at once arranged that they were each to have their own book and sit at opposite sides of the table. As soon as ever she could, she escaped. To make up for this Kallem invited Larssen to spend the evening with them, and tried to thaw him up a little; but no, he was just as stiff and wary when he left as when he came. Kallem's thoughts were much taken up by him. Who in all the world could he be, and how had he managed to become like this?

One day Kallem had occasion to go to his house. There he found a thin, stiff-looking woman who was Kristen Larssen's wife, her head wrapped in a black shawl; if the husband had too little covering on his head, she certainly had too much. No children. No fire on the hearth; she said she cooked the food for many days at a time. She went about knitting with a shrewd and suspicious air. Kallem began to think they had agreed to live as cheaply as possible, so as to scrape as much money together as they could for the journey they wished to take. As he wanted an excuse for this visit, he had taken a revolver with him that would not go off; it was in its case, so he had taken case and all with him, but only remarked now that the ammunition for the revolver was in it too. He showed it to her.

"Oh, there are many of that kind here," she answered, and took it up without the slightest fear.

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"What a charming weapon," she said, and laid it down, locked it, and put the case on a shelf over her husband's work-table. Both the shelf and the table were covered with things waiting to be mended.

"He has too much work out just now," said she ;
"such trifles must wait."

Work-room, kitchen, and bedroom were all comprised in this one apartment. A bell hung on the wall, a table, a bed, a long bench, and three wooden chairs ; otherwise the room was completely bare—then a nasty strong smell.

He went home past Sören Pedersen, the saddler's shop. Kallem had helped him to begin this shop, he was getting on well. There stood Kristen Larssen, with a glass in one hand, a bottle in the other, and Sören Pedersen and his wife were screaming or singing in front of the glass and bottle ; it sounded like the long melancholy howling of a dog. Kristen Larssen laughed with a laugh that came from the very essence of his being. There was an unctuous satisfaction in this outburst, the exposure of a malicious heart's innermost feelings, an explorer's hallelujah of wildest delight. Was it that he took an interest in these two people ? Who knows ? Did he repeat this every day ?

Ragni soon had cause again to feel Kallem's talent of making work for every one.

They were to meet old Pastor Meek and his granddaughter, Tilla Kraby, at a small party given by Dr. Kent ; they had just returned from a trip abroad, but were to start again immediately.

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They had been made much of during this short, and in all probability last, visit to these parts of the country ; this party was given for them, and Kallem and his wife, who otherwise did not go out much, went to it solely to have a look at them. The guests of the evening were very late in coming, but in the meantime a very stout lady, barely thirty years of age, was introduced to Ragni ; she was bright and good-looking. She startled Ragni by saying : " I don't know whether it will be a disagreeable piece of news to you to hear that I am Sören Kule's sister." As she remarked how very uncomfortable Ragni looked, she quickly took her aside : " Pray do not think otherwise than that I should have acted exactly as you did," she whispered. " And particularly if I had met a man like your husband"—she pressed Ragni's arm. She was clever and free and easy, and had little idea that she was torturing the delicate feelings of the being whose arm she held. The fact that her face and figure had a resemblance to the " whale tribe" was enough ; Ragni recognised everything, even the peculiarity of the " swimmers ;" she could not help thinking of pork. At last old Pastor Meek and his granddaughter appeared ; their host and his sister—Dr. Kent was not married—went to receive them with almost all the rest of the company after them. One could distinguish amongst the " How do you do's" and " Welcomes" of the foremost, remarks from those who were behind. " How good-looking he is !" " What a traveller Tilla is !" In the meanwhile, Kallem and Ragni stood by and wondered who it

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was they were like ; they seemed to recognise their faces.

Pastor Meek was a man of medium height, broad-shouldered, but rather stout. He carried his head high, it was broad and glistening, encircled by thick white hair. "Now I know!" whispered Ragni, "I am sure they are related to that young man we met the first day we were here. Of course you remember him, he was so good-looking."

"Yes, of course, that's it! The same arched face. They might perfectly belong to the Bourbons."

The old man thanked the company for their welcome in a low voice, but he spoke slowly. His eyes were not cheerful, on the contrary, they were wistful and resigned. He did not give one the impression of being a determined man, but of being kind-hearted and thoughtful. When any of the officials of high standing spoke to him, he put on a stiff, ceremonious manner, quite in the old style.

"The new doctor" was introduced, and Fru Lilli Bing said to Ragni, as if she knew all about it: "Oh, how you two must suit each other! May I introduce you Fru Kallem, Fröken Kraby?" They bowed to one another rather shyly, but began to talk of the young man whom Fröken Kraby was like; he was her nephew, and was very musical. This led to their speaking of music, and they never left one another's side for the rest of the evening.

Ragni had seldom—one may say never—with the exception of Kallem, found any one who had

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so entirely taken up her thoughts. This quiet, and yet at the same time bright, blondine was so charming, and all she said was the expression of her own thoughts. Alas ! she had to leave the town in a few days forever ! That this was the first, and perhaps the last, time they were ever to meet, drew them with a kind of melancholy sweetness to each other. Ragni agreed on this account to play when her host, later in the evening, in his chaffing way, asked her to do so ; she wished her new friend to learn to know her as well as possible.

"Do stand so that I may see a face I know," she whispered, and then began Solveig's song from "Per Gynt." They had probably expected a showy piece, not such a simple melody ; but when the piano had finished "singing," they were all so charmed that the town magistrate, who was general spokesman on such occasions, begged her to repeat it ; which she readily did. Then followed the Wizard's March, so unutterably weird ; directly after that Selmer's "Child's Frolics," such a delicate, charming contrast ; she played it with the same clear understanding and feeling of the smallest nuances ; then came a quiet, old-fashioned song by Sinding, each note like a separate word ; then a bright, lively song by Svendsen ; and finished up with a festival march by Selmer. She was not at all nervous to-day, her eyes flashed out volumes to Tilla, and from her to many others, volumes of all sorts of enchanted tales. The company was much entertained ; the town magistrate marched about like

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a braying trumpet. Old Meek came up to her with old-fashioned gallantry ; Tilla whispered to her : "Grandfather is so musical."

An hour later, old Pastor Meek went away ; he never stayed longer than that at a party ; his granddaughter left with him, and Kallem and Ragni joined them.

The evening was mild, considering that it was the end of August, when there were always such sudden changes after sunset ; still it was not so mild but what they were obliged to have on both cloaks and overcoats. There were people out walking everywhere. When they came to the Kallems' house, Ragni, who otherwise was so very retiring and shy, asked if they would not go in with them for a little while, and the old man answered politely that if there was the slightest hope of hearing some more music, the invitation was only too acceptable. So the lamps were lighted in the room, the piano opened, and an Italian barcarole went rowing away out through the open windows. Old Pastor Meek was delighted, and ventured to ask whether his grandson, who was at the school here, might come and hear Fru Kallem play—of course only if it was quite convenient. Unfortunately, he was so taken up with his music that he had reached the age of nineteen without having passed his student's examination ; but as there was no help for it, it was just as well he should hear good music. Ragni replied that it would be a pleasure to her. Kallem asked if he should go to him and tell him he could come ? The old man was most grateful

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to him, and would be still more so, if at the same time the doctor would examine him and see what was the matter with him ; there was something wrong. Kallem said that he had noticed it too, and thought he would be able to find out what it was.

The old man sat down to the piano :

"Now you shall hear one of his songs," said he. And with fingers not so stiff as might have been expected, and with a low voice, as though one were fingering a church bell—particularly with a peculiar use of head-voice, he hummed :

When does the morning dawn ?
When golden rays are floating
O'er the snow-covered heights
Deep down in the dark rifts,
Lifts
The stem that turns to the light
Till it feels like an angel with wings.
Then it is morning,
Bright clear morning.
But in stormy weather,
And when my heart is sad,
There's no morn for me,
None.

Surely the morning has dawned
When the flowers have burst into bloom,
And the birds having broken their fast,
Are chirping a promise that
The woods
Shall have fresh green crowns as a gift,
The brook have a sight of the sea.
Then it is morning,
Bright, clear morning.
But in stormy weather,
And when my heart is sad,
There's no morn for me,
None.

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When does the morning dawn?
When the strength that glows through
Sorrow and storm, awakens
The sun in thy soul, so thy bosom
Warmly
Embraces the world in this cause:
To be truly good to each and all!
Then it is morning,
Bright, clear morning.
The greatest strength thou knowest,
And the most dangerous too—
Is it that thou would'st have?
Yes.

Both voice and accompaniment were peculiar.
Ragni exclaimed: "Oh, how it all floats away!"

Kallem asked whose words they were—evidently a woman's? Tilla answered that it was taken from a newspaper; it was doubtless a translation. But when the others had left them, Ragni confided to Kallem that the "woman's words" was one of her translations! His cousin had got it into a Norwegian-American paper; and from that it had gone further still. This coincidence was sufficient to make Kallem go the very next day to Karl Meek—and three days later the latter, with his piano, books, and clothes, was established up in a large attic in Kallem's house, the one that looked out to the park. Kallem had overcome Ragni's strongest opposition.

V

FROM that time there sat at their table a tall, long-haired individual, with legs twisted round those of the chair, with long red fingers always covered with chilblains, and so clammy that Ragni could not touch them. Nor could she bring herself to speak to him after what Kallem had told her about him ; all the good and prepossessing qualities that she had seen in him at their first meeting had been effaced by what she had heard. He entered the room quickly, as if he had practised it, and then his coat or his sleeve caught in the door handle, or he did not shut the door the first time he tried, or his legs tripped him up, or he dragged a chair along with him, or knocked up against the servant who had just put down something on the table and was leaving the room. He never looked any one in the face, his really fine eyes were sleepy and dull, his cheeks were ashen-grey ; he studied the patterns on the plate, on the Chinese bread-basket which stood in front of him. He never uttered a word ; if any one spoke to him he was so startled that he answered "yes" or "no" as if he had hot cinders in his mouth. But he ate—according to Ragni's way of reckoning—

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like a carpenter's horse. And then, when he wiped his clammy hands on his trousers or up in his thick greasy hair, he was worse than Kristen Larssen.

This disgusting youth at her table every blessed day, and in the evenings Kristen Larssen ! To say nothing of all the old women Kallem brought in to her so that she might supply them with warm woollen things ; children, too, who sometimes were to be clothed from top to toe—his tuberculous friends !

Not only did she feel repelled by the actual persons, but every door was left open ; she had not a corner where she could be at liberty, nor could she call her time her own. There was no use talking to him about it, as long as that, which was her greatest horror, was his greatest pleasure. There was a little jealousy, too, mixed up with it : he did not think enough about her and her doings. He had quite put on one side that affair with his sister ; the minister and his wife had long since returned to town, Josephine had paid them a flying visit one morning in their garden, with some flowers from old Kallem's grave ; the brothers-in-law met in the street and by sick-beds ; then, too, Kallem sometimes met his sister, who was very good to the poor ; but she did not come to him, nor he to her ; neither was there any party given in their honour at the minister's house, as every one had expected ; in fact, there were no more parties at all. Not for a moment did Ragni doubt the reason of this. Kallem did not understand how this unspoken

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doubt worried her ; nor could he be made to see that in a way it shut her out from the town ; and she would not worry him with it. He had the privilege of the busy man, to put everything on one side which did not seem "clear" to him. In his daily tubercular chase, the old women and children whom he brought in his train were more to him than "all religious disputes ;" and unfortunately, more too than the comfort and sense of beauty which for her were an absolute necessity.

At the further end of the large hospital yard was a long provision store and woodhouse, &c. Kallem had a hall for gymnastics fitted up there, and he and the ashen-grey young man spent most of their evenings there after six o'clock. As long as this lasted, he came home very punctually, did his own exercises, then arranged a class and was himself the leader. It was a miserable affair to begin with, but with his accustomed energy he brought order and go into it. The timid youth had hardly touched his piano since he had been there, he was afraid of Fru Kallem. So Kallem went up to him every evening for half an hour with his book ; he made Karl play whilst he sat there. In his capacity as doctor he had forced his way to his confidence ; he looked after him with watchful friendliness, and soon the youth came into the room more at his ease, and did not sneak away so quickly. And at last she took courage—after earnest entreaties from Kallem—and said to the youth one Sunday morning : "No, don't go upstairs ;

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come, let us try to play some duets together ! We will take easy pieces," she added. He was in despair ; but as good luck would have it, he nearly overturned the piano stool as he was going to sit down, and almost upset hers too in trying to save his own, and at that they both began to laugh ; that helped them through the worst. She sat there fresh and slim, in a red silk dress, with lace at her neck and wrists, her long, white piano fingers well away from his long red ones ; her intelligent face often turned toward him, a scent of mignonette from her dress, and the perfume of her hair . . . he trembled with shyness. And how ugly he thought himself ! And the smell of his hair ! He struggled so to play, that he was soon tired and made stupid mistakes. " I am sure you are not inclined for it to-day," said she, and got up.

He went off like a beaten hound ; he shrunk from all, he writhed, and for the ninth or ninetieth time made up his mind to run away. He never appeared at dinner-time, and was not to be found in all the house, so Kallem thought he would ask about it ; she told him then what a miserable performance it had been ; he had got tired after barely half an hour ; a young man who could not stand more than that disgusted her. " Oh, you everlasting æsthetic ! "—he went to look for the youth, and sacrificed his delightful Sunday afternoon to it, and came home with him toward evening. Then she whispered to him, when they were in the office, that she was going to be very good. Kristen Larssen came, and more patient

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than any beaten poodle, she sat herself down to give him an English lesson.

From the very first she had felt compassion for this peculiar man ; but she froze to an icicle in his society, and in the vicinity of his breath. Therefore, she herself thought that it was horribly cowardly of her to go on with it without a complaint ; it was certainly not out of compassion. Punctual to the minute he appeared, in his long brown coat with the tight sleeves, and with a working-man's unbearable smell of stale perspiration from clothes and body. His breath reached right across the table ; she felt it too, even if it did not really reach her. He pulled forward his chair, sat down, and opened his book, and when he had found his place, he sent his cold, horrible eyes across to her warm, startled, dove-like ones, startled beyond bounds. His long, black-smudged fingers, covered with black hair like his whole hand, took hold, the one hand of the book, the fingers of the other he used to point with ; then he cleared his throat well, and finally began. Usually he asked about something from the last lesson ; always intelligent, suspecting a mistake on her part, a want of perception or logic. He made her feel unsafe under the safest circumstances.

When he slowly, and with much deliberation, struggled on, word for word, and she presumed to interrupt him because he had made a mistake, he put down his finger still firmer to mark the place where he had been caught tripping, and looked up at her vexed and suspicious. Then she in a

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most uncertain way reiterated her correction ; but never could she succeed in making it clear enough to him ; he had always to ask for further explanations. She repeated it a third time, and at last he was gracious enough to let it pass—to her account. Each time she interrupted him she knew what would follow—and knew that wave upon wave of that bad breath would be wafted across to her.

What a piece of work it was for this man to come to her as sure as he always was ; never repeating a mistake that once had been corrected ; and what capacity he had enabling him to ask all those extraordinary questions, which sometimes would have done honour to a philologist—all this she neither overlooked nor undervalued. But to her he was so truly fearful. He was too painfully like an old monkey she had seen sedately eating with a silver spoon. This picture hanging grinning over him was like revenge.

There was one circumstance in her daily life which made it very pleasant, it was her work together with the servant ; they became very good friends. Both of them got on so well together—Ragni found out what there was to do, and the other one did it. Ragni liked work and was quick about it, the servant was intelligent and anxious to learn ; they took a pleasure in each other's society.

A fortnight after the unsuccessful attempt at duet-playing, she said to Karl Meek :

"What do you think about it ? Shall we try once more ?"

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"No thank you, it—it won't do!" answered he, horrified.

"Oh, yes, I have looked out a duet which you will be able to manage." She took it out, he stood at a distance of two ells and looked at it—grew very red, and passed his hands through his hair.

"Do you know it?" He never answered; it was a piece of his own, he called it the "Mountain Brook," and he had often played it for Kallem upstairs; now it had been arranged as a duet; in this way she wished to make up for the last time.

"Come, now!" In the same red silk dress, with the same lace falling over her long playing-fingers, there she sat, the same figure, the same wonderfully dreamy eyes looking at him sometimes in a way that made him shiver. But now he was himself in new clothes, and his hair was cut and well arranged, as was his whole person. And the "mountain brook" came rushing from under her nimble fingers; if he were not always able to keep up with her, she waited to take him along. At last, if not quite perfect, it was at all events not so bad but what she graciously promised in the future to go on with it.

He bowed, and would have gone. "It is Sunday," said she, "you can't have anything to do?"

"No."

"Shall we go for a walk?"

"Yes, if you . . . Oh, yes!"

Quick as an arrow he came down in overcoat

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and fur cap, and she appeared in her pretty cloak and the coquettish American hat with feathers.

"Let us go up the hill and meet the doctor."

They went off. She felt she would have to talk the whole time, so she began to describe the snow-storms on the American prairies, and what the consequences could be for both man and beast. He saw how little by little the colour came to her cheeks, and how her small feet could hurry along the road. There was no sun that October day, but it was not cold; the fields were dark and dull, and the foliage was just beginning to turn; but he saw nothing of all that, he was overcome by the thought that she had wished to walk with him, she, the most refined, the most musical woman he knew. For her sake he would so gladly roll in the dust, shoot himself with a pistol, or jump into the lake. This was no imaginary woman, it was Ragni Kallem in the red silk dress under the soft cloak, and the American hat with feathers—the one that all his companions admired so much. Those eyes gazed at him; and he dared not go down to their very depths. She walked and talked with him before everybody. Then he too began to talk, as they went from winter in America to winter in the forest districts. His father, Pastor Meek's son Otto, was a doctor and had married a farmer's daughter from a large farm in the forest district, and lived there like any other peasant. Together with him Karl had been across the river-bed, away up in the solitude of the wooded mountains; he had helped at the felling of timber, the netting

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of deer, and shooting ; he talked of scenery and impressions of which she had not the slightest idea. He described the appearance of a black-cock, its courtship, habits, the flapping of its wings, and its cry so vividly, that she ever after called him the "black-cock."

They did not meet Kallem, and went back therefore by the same road. They played their duet over again, and much better than at first ; they wished to practise it well so as to play it some evening when Kallem was sitting in his office ! To him Kallem was the greatest and highest he knew.

Little by little she gained influence over the "black-cock," and got accustomed to his oval face, his variable moods, one moment radiant and beaming, the next down in the depths, hasty and impetuous, then humbly submissive, with short spells of industry and long ones of *dolce far niente*, very much got up, but at the same time very slovenly ; she began to think him quite good-looking, and had no objection to take him by the hand. She helped him with his lessons ; especially with his English. His learning was very scrappy, so Kallem proposed that he should leave school and study privately those things he was so far behind in, and he wrote to Karl's father about it at once. After this Karl often sat in the large room with his books and exercises, played and read, and read and played—alone and together with her.

In the afternoons they were seen out taking long walks together. As soon as the snow lay

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firm on the ground—it had come the beginning of November—they would go and meet Kallem and drive home with him, each standing on one of the runners of his sledge. As soon as ever the bay was frozen they were out on the ice, the quickest and most agile of all. One sport alone had Kallem and he reserved for themselves, and that was to get Karl to walk on his hands. With the greatest solemnity the doctor would lift up his long legs and hold them up, while the other tried till he could try no longer. At first this went on only in the gymnasium, but soon they began in the room, in the passage, even on the stairs, just before dinner, just before supper too: "Up with your legs, lad!" How Ragni laughed every time he tumbled down again. At last she too became anxious that he should succeed! but he never could manage it; he was "too limp." Then it became a matter of honour for him; and the same for her too. She took a great interest in trying to make a "man" of him; his limp appearance, his tendency to dream and idle away his time, annoyed her greatly; she told him so. But he could not stand much, and soon became cross. Then she punished him by being very reserved. It was of no use his being altogether crushed and that he made hundreds of advances, even that he cried; she allowed him to live in mortal terror of her complaining to Kallem; she helped him with his work, but without either a word or a look but what belonged to the subject; she refused to go out with him; she never saw him—until in Kallem's presence she could again talk as though

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nothing had happened. Kallem, of course, knew nothing of all these shadows cast over their mutual intercourse.

Kallem associated with no one, he had not time. He was obliged to diminish his practice, so that he took serious steps to come to an arrangement with Dr. Arentz, the young military surgeon, that he should be his assistant. This was arranged by the end of November, and from that time he could take more part and interest in the lessons and mutual occupations which rendered them all the more firmly established.

Karl Meek's father travelled into town on purpose to thank them, and to invite them to accompany his son up to the forest district for Christmas. Otto Meek was taller and stouter than his old father; the face was in more grand style, more truly "Bourbon;" but it was melancholy, or rather gloomy. Kallem accepted the invitation, and at once made arrangements with his colleagues to enable him to get away. But as the time drew near Dr. Kent fell ill, and Ragni was obliged, however unwillingly, to start alone with Karl; Kallem would follow them. A fur cloak for driving was bought for her, fur boots, a foot-muff; a valuable fur cap, too, a present from Karl. She looked like a Greenlander when she had it on.

Kallem went to the station with them; Ragni had been crying a little—in honour of its being the first parting since they were married. As she sat in the train and Kallem stood outside, she was going to begin again; he had to get in and

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scold her. As soon as her tears were checked, he got down again and looked up at Karl, who sat there happy and healthy. "I say, dear old 'black-cock,' from this time I shall always say 'thou' to you and call you Karl, for you are a good fellow!" But Karl jumped right down and threw himself on his neck.

So they departed.

Kallem read a great deal and thought it not altogether unpleasant to be at peace; latterly they had occupied his time very much. But already the third day, which was Christmas Eve, it felt lonely; he thought he would go and take them by surprise; Dr. Kent was better.

On the evening of Christmas Day he was just coming away from Kent and going up to the hospital, when he saw in the distance a small crowd at the gate. A horse and sledge were just driving away; the sledge was full of straw and bed-clothes; some sick person must have been driven in. He heard also children crying. Who had been hurt? It was Andersen, the mason—the same man who had greeted Kallem and his wife from up on the new house, the first day they came to the town. In the winter, mason Andersen went about and did pedlar business whilst his own trade was at a stand-still, and in crossing over a forest ridge he had lost his way, fallen and hurt himself, and had to lie there until, by the merest chance, he had been found. Kallem found his inconsolable wife with the deaconesses, and heard from her that her husband, who was an active man, had made extra haste as it was just

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before Christmas, and had wanted to take a short cut so as to reach home for Christmas ; Andersen was always so "fond of his home." But his sight was bad, and he slipped on his Lapp-shoes and cut and broke his leg, and there he lay not able to move. That was how he kept Christmas. "We waited and waited" she said, "and the children too !"

Kallem went up to the patient, who was in bed in a warm room. The big man with the large brown beard floating over his shirt was altogether unrecognisable. The eyes were pressed together, the eyelids swollen, stiff. The mucous membrane of the eye was inflamed, the cornea was threatened, and as it was painful at the slightest ray of light, there was probably greater danger at hand. Swollen bluish-red patches on the face ; the fingers of both hands quite white and without feeling ; the backs of the hands twice their usual size and covered with large blisters full of water. The right leg was broken at the upper end of the fibula, the fracture went up into the knee-joint ; the wound was as large as a crown-piece, a splinter of bone sticking out like a finger. Compared with this, all other injury to the foot was of little consequence.

Andersen could hardly speak, but now and again groaned that his foot must not be cut off. Kallem answered repeatedly as he helped him, that the next morning's daylight would decide it. The room was at once half-darkened, compresses of boron water were laid on his eyes, with urgent instructions to change constantly ; his face was

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rubbed in with oil and wrapped in a thin sheet of wadding, the same with the hands ; the wound in the leg was syringed with carbolic water, and a small bleeding vein was bound up, the wound sprinkled with iodoform and wrapped round with wadding, and put in a wire bandage. If he should awake and feel weak, he was to have ether every second hour, and if in any very great pain then an injection of morphia.

After that he fell asleep ; but each time he awoke he complained of unbearable pain—less from the fracture, but more particularly down the shin-bone to the back of the foot ; he was in constant fear that his foot would be amputated.

At nine o'clock the next morning, Kallem thought him better in all respects. His mind was clearer, too, now, but was still much taken up about his foot—if only it might be spared. He wished to see his good friend the minister ; the wife was there, and she went off at once to beg the minister to come to him a little before church began. Meanwhile his eyes were attended to ; they were less swollen, but could not bear the light ; atropin was used to them and the compresses changed for a light bandage. Kallem was on the lookout when Andersen's wife came back with the minister ; he went to meet them. According to his opinion, Andersen's right leg would undoubtedly have to be exarticulated, that is, the leg taken off at the knee-joint ; but the patient was not to know that at present. The wife, who until now had taken the accident with strength of mind and calmness, broke down entirely, so

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Kallem dared not let her go into the room; the minister went in alone.

It made a deep impression on the latter to stand beside his sick friend in this darkened room, and by degrees distinguish the giant lying there without eyes, with an unrecognisable face, his hands in bags and to hear him moaning. But soon he was bound to admire his strength and his confident faith. Andersen wished them to pray for him in church to-day; "they all know me," said he. The minister agreed to it, but on the spot he offered up a heartfelt prayer for him and for all who were dependent on him. The sick man was much cheered by this prayer; he whispered: "I have made a covenant with God about my foot," then lay quite quiet whilst the minister pronounced St. Paul's blessing over him. Within an hour from then Dr. Arentz came, and Andersen was carried into the operating-room. They told him that they intended to chloroform him so as thoroughly to examine his injuries; and as he was still suffering such intolerable pain, he agreed to it at once; "but my foot is not to be cut off."

A closer examination proved that the the upper extremity of the fibula was splintered up cross-ways into the knee-joint; unfortunately, too, one of the larger veins lay pressed between the fractured extremities, so that its pouch was filled by a large thrombus, which stretched up a few inches of the thigh.

As a matter of course, the leg had to be amputated; it was done in a quarter of an hour.

All those who were to help in nursing him were

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strictly enjoined to let him believe that his leg had been spared. All excitement was to be avoided, so that there might be no possibility of his raising himself in bed and changing his position ; if a thrombus were started, it would be all over with him. He was laid in a wire bandage from the hip-joint and down to the foot of the bed, the stump was wrapped in a bandage of carbolic gauze and jute, and fastened at the outer side to a block.

When he was in bed again they roused him, but impressed upon him to keep perfectly quite. They gave him wine, but in tablespoonfuls, so that he need not move ; in the same way he had some bouillon (beef-tea) and the yolk of an egg ; soon he fell asleep again.

As soon as Kallem had changed his coat, he went down to the deaconesses' room where the wife was waiting, and told her the whole case, together with the danger threatening if Andersen were in any way agitated. He grew quite fond of her broad, intelligent face with the eagle's nose ; seldom had he come across a purer strength of character. "Should this end badly," said he, "you have still many friends."

"God lives," whispered she.

Between three and four o'clock Andersen woke up, took more spoonfuls of wine, beef-tea, eggs, milk ; he assured them that he felt well enough, except that his shin-bone pained him ; occasionally too he felt a pain in his heel. Toward evening his vital powers were much stronger, and he wished to see the minister again. Just as his wife

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was going to fetch him, he came of his own accord. Kallem had impressed on him that he was to pretend that the leg was still on.

It was evident at once that Andersen just lay there and thought of nothing else. "I think now I can say that God has heard my prayer," said he ; "therefore must He be thanked in a fitting manner."

The minister was touched by this, and felt called upon to give hearty thanks that the leg had proved to be a pledge of God's mercy to the sick man, and had allied him still more closely with his Saviour. Andersen seemed to be considering the matter ; at last he said : "Pray now that He will spare the leg afterwards too."

What could make him think of that ?

"Oh, because I have so much pain in it."

But shortly before he thought his prayers had been heard ?

"Yes ; but it is a good thing to pray without ceasing."

The minister tried to refuse ; but the patient at once became restless, and his wife whispered meekly that Andersen must be allowed his way in this. So the minister yielded. But he did it more on her responsibility than on his own, and it passed over. Kallem had just gone home when the minister came to him there, very pale, and told him what had taken place. "I will not do that over again," said he.

"I can assure you, you have done a good deed." The minister stood with his overcoat and hat on, his hand on the door-handle ; Kallem's tone and

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words offended him. "Through truth alone can we draw near the God of truth. Good-bye!"

The doctor followed him out: "You believe, then, that if you now tell Andersen his leg has been cut off, that God can save him?"

"Yes," answered the minister, angrily, without turning round.

It was impossible for Kallem to leave now. He wrote a lengthily detailed letter to Ragni and promised to come as soon as he could.

The next morning he found everything in the most desirable order; but enforced the greatest quiet in his position in bed, and that he was not to talk so much. In the afternoon Andersen wished to take the sacrament, but the deaconess answered that he could not stand so much agitation. "I wish to renew my covenant with God," replied Andersen.

They could not do otherwise but listen to this, but they dared not consent without first asking the doctor, and he had been sent for in the morning to attend a confinement. The deaconess consulted with the porter, who had been there so long that he was all-powerful. Andersen repeated his wish to him too in the most decided way, and the porter thought it could not be avoided; he would take the responsibility on himself. Shortly after the minister and he were together in the porter's room to take the chill off the wine; the weather had changed and it was a bitterly cold evening. They both went upstairs. Andersen was glad to hear who it was who came; "I knew it," said he.

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The minister asked if there were anything special ;

" Yes, there was."

The others left the room. Then Andersen said that once, when he was young, he had given a boy a rupture with the same foot that was now injured. It was surely not on that account that he was now punished ?

" No."

" No, but for all that he had been thinking so much about it, and had a longing to take the sacrament."

There was nothing else the matter ?

" No."

The minister begged him to collect his thoughts, now they would pray together. Andersen was silent while this went on. After the prayer the minister gave him absolution from sins, and said that now he would give him the bread and wine.

" Oh, wait a little ! Now I have received absolution from my sins, now there is a clean page. Let us write down the leg on that, that it may be read in heaven. I feel so happy, yes, I am so truly happy !"

" The whole body is included in the covenant, dear Andersen."

" Yes, but this time the Lord is to promise my wife and children that my leg will get quite well. Come now !"

He stretched out his frost-bitten hands.

The perspiration broke out on the minister's face. " I cannot do this," whispered he, quite unconsciously.

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Andersen's mouth quivered, his bandaged hands fumbled for something ; he raised them to his eyes, but they were met by the bandage. "We cannot question the justice of God," said the minister ; "supposing now that what we wish for is impossible ?"

Was there something in the minister's voice, or was it the actual opposition that made Andersen suspicious ?

Without answering, he tore the bandage from his eyes, and he raised himself up, did it quickly, flung the bedclothes aside and fell back on his pillow, put his hand on his chest, crying out that he was suffocating, his breathing was alarming. A clot of blood (thrombus) had gone up into the lung.

The minister had put down what he was holding in his hands, and hastened to the door where the porter and the others were waiting outside ; they ran for Doctor Arentz and Doctor Kent, but before either of them arrived Kallem had come back. The minister had left by then ; Andersen died that same night.

VI

THE porter was the first who had to pay for it. He was dismissed that same day.

Then Kallem went down to Andersen's widow. "You are a very clever, capable woman. If you like you shall have the place as porter and steward at the hospital. Accept it and begin at once to-morrow to pack up and move in with the children, you will have less time to think about your sorrow. Have you a good servant-girl?"

"Yes."

"Take her with you. More will not be necessary. Everything else is ready, and the deaconesses will help you."

The upper deaconess got a sound rating ; but nothing further. She was to atone for her mistake by doing all that lay in her power to help mother Andersen.

He made no effort to see the minister, nor the minister to see him. He heard from others that he had been ill, which he thought likely enough. A few days later Kallem met Josephine in the street ; she pretended not to see him.

The effect produced by this incident is not easily described. The whole town was in a

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tumult. There must be something peculiar about belief altogether, when belief in a lie could save a man from certain death.

Of course the porter and his large family came down upon the minister and his wife like a heavy beam. Josephine had to provide money for starting them in a bookseller's shop, much more money than she wished to part with.

From that time Kallem had a true and faithful enemy in that man.

Directly after all this Kallem travelled up to the wood district. He gave no notice of his coming; he came driving up from the station to the farm one moonlight evening just as the yard and a good part of the road were filled with sledges; some had people in them, some were empty; old and young, all were going on a sleighing expedition; they were to start from here and come back to the farm to dance.

No one noticed him coming from the station; they thought he belonged to the party. It was only when he stood in the passage where the people of the house and their guests were dressing that several of them saw he was a stranger; but they did not think much about that; many fur-clad figures were trampling out and in. Ragni had just got her fur on when she felt herself embraced from behind. She gave a scream and looked up. What delight that was! And Karl, who stood aside in a corner struggling to pull on his long boots—without a sound or word he pulled them off again, his fur too, flung his legs up in the air and away he went on his hands to

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greet Kallem ; at last he had acquired the art ! The father stood by with his thick hair and his melancholy face ; he introduced Kallem to his wife, a pale, quiet creature ; she spoke in the dialect of that district and had a weak voice—about all that Kallem remarked in her. He had now no time for anything but just to join them.

There was much neighing of horses, and shouting and little screams, and laughter until “ Ready ! ” was sung out down all the line and the first sledge with a lady in it and a fur-man standing behind dashed off ; then sledge upon sledge, broad ones and narrow ones, sledges with one horse and sledges with two horses. All along the snowy field in the moonlight there was a long waving line with blackish-grey dots on it wending toward the wood, while soon re-echoed through the trees the sound of bells, dogs, laughing and talking. Some began to sing, others joined in ; but it was impossible to keep time, so they gave it up. Kallem sat in a broad sledge with his wife. She looked so sweet wrapped in all her furs that he several times tried to kiss her—a very difficult task. What a lot she had experienced ! As he listened to her it became clear to him that it was only now she was enjoying her youth. He had never seen any one so happy, had never known that she had such a longing for enjoyment in her. The same thing struck him later in the evening, as they danced, played games, chattered, played, ate ; she was enjoying herself now for many past years. Whether it was a ponderous wood-owner who took her round her slim waist and carried

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her off so that she barely touched the floor with the tips of her toes, or whether she caught hold of one of the children and waltzed away with it, or of Karl or some other youth from school or university whirled her round the reverse way like a top—there was always the same delighted face, the same zealous eagerness. The dancing and games went on in a corner room reaching right across the house; but many kept streaming out from there and into other rooms, yes, even into the kitchen over in the other corner; the door into it was open. A few elderly gentleman tried to have a game of cards in a corner, but had to give it up; they were perpetually being called away to dance, they too. Old and young, all were equally happy.

At eleven o'clock the next day Ragni was still asleep, and when she came downstairs about noon, rather tired and confused and much astonished that Kallem had got up without her hearing him, she was informed that he had gone away! A telegram from Dr. Kent, who was ill again, made it impossible for him to remain longer. A few hasty lines, scribbled while he ate his breakfast, comforted her a little. He wrote that he would not wake her as she had been up so late the night before, still less would he have her with him; but never had he felt a greater pleasure than in seeing her so happy.

The first thing Kallem found when he got home was an invitation to a ball from the "club." And he decided to accept it. The invitation was in his sister's hand-writing (she was one of the

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patronesses) and it was to "Dr. and Mrs. Kallem." Dear me!

Should he telegraph for Ragni? He decided to let her stay where she was; she could not be better off.

Meanwhile he had to do with a very serious matter. His first visit the same evening was to a poor woman down in the town, Sissel Aune, a washerwoman and mother of a large family; she was in bed with inflammation of the lungs. It was particularly on her account that Kent had telegraphed. The seventh day had passed without any crisis, and when this night was half through, the ninth day would be over too. Would she survive it? Both upper and lower tips of the lung were affected. The heart was weak, the pulse very feeble, and there were other bad symptoms. Should he try to brace up the heart with atropin for the last struggle? He had never tried that remedy in a similar case, but it seemed reasonable enough. Wherever he went and whatever he did, this question haunted him. The five children were over with Sören Pedersen and his wife Aase; those two were capital in such emergencies.

The second time he went there he stayed; it was a wrestling match with death.

It was a small but clean room with three beds. A miserable geranium in the window and a portrait of King Charles XV. on horseback, in frame and glass, hanging on the wall, a few photographs fastened up with pins, and beside them a violin with three strings, the forth hanging down loose.

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The poor creature who lay there had once been a good-looking woman, should she recover she would still be hard-working and active. But now she was wasted away to skin and bone, her worn-out hard-working hands resting on the ragged sheet. But the man who sat beside her was not strong like she was ; no, he was indeed a poor weak thing ! A good-natured face, so far in keeping with the violin on the wall that perhaps a string had cracked in himself before the one now hanging there had given way. Tired and worn out by night-watching, he sat there quite by himself, not because the neighbours were chary with their help, but because the one who had last sat there was resting now until the last struggle should begin. It had touched Kallem to see that the neighbours kept watch on each side of the house, wishing to prevent Christmas merry-makers from passing that way ; they relieved guard the whole night through. He heard this from the woman who came again about eleven o'clock to help. There was not much to be done except for the doctor, and he did not know whether he dare do anything.

After the first injection of one-third of a milligramme the pulse was raised. Kallem felt some hope, but dare not send it on to the imploring eyes of the husband ; it might deceive him. The pulse kept steady for a couple of hours, then it fell ; a fresh dose and it rose again. He sat there watching her in great anxiety. He had a book with him and tried to hold it under the lamp, now and again he took in a little of it, but it was

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speedily forgotten. Not a word was spoken, but there were groans and sighs. The last shouts outside in the distance, the last sound of bells died away, the last door had long since been shut, the night was grey and still. Five children, the eldest not more than ten years old, were about to lose their provider, and the man who sat there, sometimes tapping his knees, then stroking them, or resting his elbows on them and clasping his hands together, and staring first at her, then at the doctor, alas, he too would lose his provider.

Each time the pulse grew weaker a fresh dose was administered, and it invariably strengthened the pulse so that it certainly seemed as though he were doing the right thing. But the crisis would not end; it was past midnight, and according to what they said the ninth day was over, and still the same wearing struggle was going on. He got up from his seat in hope and fear, and sat down again, took his book, held it up, laid it down—and went to take her temperature. Her strength was fast ebbing away; the husband saw it in his face and he struggled to keep back his tears; the doctor warned him to be quiet. One more trial, and soon after she fell asleep. But was that really sleep? He listened. The others looked at him and he at them. He left the bedside for a little while to return to it with fresh powers of judging; it was genuine, quiet sleep! He turned round to the husband, who read it in his face and a reflection of the light of life flitted over from the doctor's to his face. He got up, again his feelings overcame him—it must break out now. “Go to

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bed!" whispered the doctor. The man flung himself down on one of the beds with his face buried in the pillow—then he gave way completely.

Whispered injunctions to the woman who sat by the stove and who now got up. Kallem promised to be there again later on in the morning; she helped him on with his overcoat, he quietly opened the door for himself and shut it again as quietly. The dull, grey weather had turned to a heavy fall of snow. Not a single light was to be seen in any window, with the exception of that one watching over the newly-kindled spark of life. As Kallem went past the saddler's shop he could not resist knocking at the door; but they were sound asleep in there. He knocked again, for he felt sure that they had given up both their bed and the warm room to the children, and were lying down themselves in the shop. He was quite right. "Who's there?" was asked, with Søren Pedersen's Funen accent. "When the children awake, tell them that their mother will get better."

"That is delightful," returned the man from Funen, and behind him could be heard Aase's north country voice: "What is that he is saying?"

Kallem replied: "Come to dinner with me and bring the children with you!"

VII

THE whole of that night and the next day there was a tremendous fall of snow, and toward evening the wind rose to a perfect storm; it drifted and piled up the newly fallen snow in great heaps. The storm passed away; but the snow fell on with equal violence. People from the country who were going to the ball got the snow-plough to drive right down to the town; in the town itself they were driving it about for the second time that day. To the ball! to the ball! The first large ball at Christmas-tide.

To the ball! to the ball! In those larger towns, where dancing is a business kept up by the younger people in turn at different houses and assemblies, no one there can have any idea of the upset caused in a small town by the prospect of the first Christmas ball, and especially amongst those young people from the country who drive in, ready-dressed for the ball underneath their furs. But just as the snow-plough good-naturedly pushes the superfluous snow to both sides, so does this old-established custom and their natural shyness do away with more than the half of all they had been romancing about

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together. A nice, well-behaved flock appears, who at first seem hardly to know each other.

Kallem was lying on the sofa, and was in capital spirits. That excellent woman, Sissel Aune, was recovering, the husband was going about to-day drunk with happiness, and with brandy, which the neighbours forced on him. The children had been there to dinner, although the servant did not approve of it ; in that respect she was like Ragni, those two were like each other in many ways.

The children were not quite so shy as Andersen's children, who were also of the party. Kallem had played the piano for them, indifferently enough, but he had walked on his hands to perfection, and the saddler had had much to say about the mason Andersen's death. It was truth had killed Andersen ; so many there are who live by lying that it is necessary some should be killed by truth, and more of such like rubbish, which Aase thought wonderful.

A long and very cheery letter from Ragni lay spread out on Kallem's stomach ; he had been reading it through for the second time. Karl had enclosed a report of her state after the doctor's departure, and that was amusing too, especially a description of her first attempt at using snow-skates (which also proved to be the last). Through it all one could see her innate cowardice.

Now he was going to a ball where a minister's wife was to be patroness ! She and her smart friend, Lilli Bing. Was Josephine doing this against her husband's wishes ? It was a public

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secret that such was the case ; Lilli Bing had betrayed it to him. The minister's wife was the first ball-room lady in the town ! The gentlemen fought for the chance of merely whirling her once round in a cotillon tour. He could see her in fancy, tall, bare-necked, dark-eyed, warm and glowing from dancing. Yes, he would have a dance with her too. He felt a longing to see her, he could not conceal the fact. He put Ragni's letter on one side, Karl's too, and the book he had been reading, then he got up, turned down the lamp, told the servant he meant to go out, then went up to dress.

It was quite extraordinary the quantity of snow that fell ; not the star-like flakes, but broad big ones, chasing one after the other. If there had been the slightest wind it would have been impossible to find one's way. The lamps were dim, the light hardly reached beyond the glass, and there was not a sound all round. Rain has a sound, and has too a scenery of its own, but snow envelops and hides away everything, never does one feel so utterly alone as in the midst of a fall of snow. Kallem had not even a garden fence to guide him, he did not stumble over a single stone by the way, none of the trees in the garden either bowed or inclined their heads for him ; he could no longer even see them, they were wrapped up and sent away. The church still stood there, but it was transformed into a heap of stones with a white staff up it. He and the church, and the church and he, there was none besides.

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The houses down the street seemed to retreat in the background; they looked like so many great wizards sitting there with huge paws in front; once those paws had been stairs. A couple of boats lay up-turned down on the sand at the end of the beach street; they looked like white elephants at rest. The sea was like a sea of snow; but strange to say the island had floated loose and drifted away, it was no longer visible. It was full moon, according to the almanac, and it certainly was not dark, although the moon was snowed away from the bewitched world.

He trudged along like a sugar-loaf turned upside down. The falling snow and he were the only moving things. It was barely ten o'clock, but still there were no eyes of fire glaring from out the house. Everything was shut up, extinguished, and snowed over. Nothing but the dimly burning lights in the lanterns bore witness that once there had been a living town there.

There, now he heard a clarinet squeak and a double-bass scrape—just as if somewhere a fox and a polar bear were hopping about together. There was tripping and there was tramping, the snowflakes were falling and the houses were deserted.

He advanced so far till he saw a smoking fiery mist round about a large house; it was from there the squeaking and scraping came. And thither he directed his steps.

Had he made a mistake? He fell, or nearly so, down into a restaurant, down into an atmo-

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sphere of tobacco, punch, and food. He saw some stout men sitting there like so many pigs buried in their fat. They were not in ball-room dress, but here came some who were. And when at last he found his way to the right stairs, several gentlemen in evening dress passed him on their way in search of tobacco and punch. Kallem hated and despised both tobacco and punch and all tavern life, and especially those men who could not dance without requiring stimulants.

No one ought to come late to a ball. He looked at the clock, it was past eleven and not only just ten as he had thought ; either he had got home too late or he had stayed reading too long. A few young men, heated and perspiring who just came out through the smoke—each time the door was opened there was a good deal of smoky fog—wished him good-evening, thereby settling the fact of his arrival, so he pursued his way mechanically and took off his outdoor garments. In the passages were more heated and perspiring people. The one seemed to be running away just because the other ran, their conversation was meaningless, their eyes wild, their laughter like a tum-rum-tumming. There came ladies, too, three and four together, looking very much like full-blown roses ; they laughed about nothing, talked about nothing, quite ready to be carried off through music and chattering. The instruments were worn out, the lights were in a hazy mist, the chandeliers a gold red colour.

The ball was overcrowded ; it was difficult to make one's way through all the men who stood

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disengaged near the door ; they were all together in a clump, a mixture of coarse and fine—a truly Norwegian mixture.

A waltz was being danced, part of the cotillon. Tall as Kallem was, he could soon see, now that his glasses were dry again, that his sister was not among the dancers, probably not in the room at all. But he forgot her, for in some respects this was an entirely new sight for him ; he knew nothing of Norwegian life but the west country and Christiania. A ball in a little Norwegian provincial town is a peculiar thing. Ladies and gentlemen who would adorn any grand Parisian ball, move easily and lightly about among young people who take things heavily in daily life, never having learnt the art of dancing, but pound away in time with unabashed honesty. Men in tail-coats, men in frock-coats, women in low-necked ball-dresses, women in plain black stuff dresses, some elderly, some quite young, every one enjoying themselves in his or her own particular way.

From the moment that Kallem had been so unfortunate as to find his way down into the restaurant or its vicinity, thereby plunging into the smell of punch and of tobacco-smoke, which he detested, from that moment he was out of temper and looked at things from the dark side. However, this passed away when he found himself in the ball-room and surrounded by so much joyful independence on all sides. A couple waltzed past him, he in frock-coat, she in a dark woollen dress fastened with a clasp ; they had a

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firm hold of each other and never stopped but went on twirling carefully and solemnly round. A tall, fair young fellow in a short jacket brushed passed them, probably a young sailor home for Christmas ; he was dancing with a woman over forty, doubtless his own mother ; she was still quite capable of holding her own through a regular topsail breeze. There went a well-known railway man, a thin individual in a tail-coat, with upturned face and hopping about with body swaying from side to side ; if he hopped on his right foot, the whole body went to the right, if on the left, then he bent to the left, always keeping time in the most conscientious way, and so happy—as happy as one of his own whistling engines ; his partner laughed all the time but not in a shy way ; on the contrary she was enjoying herself. And they kept on dancing, starting afresh almost the moment after they sat down. Then a business man swept by, directly after him an officer, both irreproachably got up, and with young, fresh partners in proper ball-dresses ; then followed a mad-looking individual with long floating hair, dancing with a tall, dark woman. They dashed through the middle of the long ball-room, up and down, every one was afraid of them and got out of their way as if they had been horses. Then came twirling round a tower-like man, a broad, round, high tower with a little thin lady leaning against him as though she were a ladder. The upper part of the tower did not move, only twirled round ; if any one had put a plate of soup upon the top, not a drop would

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have spilled. Then there were two who held out their arms like sails, two tall people, taking up as much room as three ordinary couples. But it seemed to be the established ball-room custom that every one had a right to just as much room as they could manage to take up, and just as much speed as they wished, and in the way and style they preferred. Here every one danced on their own account, and not for dancing's sake only, but to enjoy themselves.

But look at these two coming, they can dance ! They came out from a side-room, a good-looking beardless cavalry lieutenant and a tall . . . Josephine ! She was in red silk trimmed with black, her firm neck, her rounded arms with their warm colouring, her luxuriant hair fastened in the usual knot, her wild-looking eyes, for they were wild, and that figure—truly, she was queen of the ball ! How she danced ! It was now the strength and natural suppleness of her body showed itself. And now the Irish blood in her came out strongly. Her brother pressed forward, almost breathless. And it seemed to him, that all stood staring at these two, who swung round now to the right, then to the left, then twirled round on the same spot, then dashing right round the room. No fresh couples joined them, all were looking on, and little by little many stopped who were dancing ; they wished to look on too. There was this drawback about the cavalry officer, that he was no taller than his partner, but he was a strong, manly-looking fellow who danced splendidly. For these two thoroughly healthy

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people dancing was a passion and intoxication; or it had that appearance. And it intoxicated others. Kallem could not resist it. He felt that he must dance, and with her too, and if possible immediately. The next time they went swinging past him he looked at her—looked at her in such a way that he knew she would be forced to look over in his direction. And she did so. She stood still, just as though some one had taken her round the waist and stopped her. "Many thanks!" said she to her partner. Instantaneously her brother stood beside her; but at the same time came her friend Lilli Bing. "Come and sit down beside me!" said she, and then, turning at once to Kallem, "How delightful to see you here!"

"I must thank you for the invitation," answered he, addressing them both. "But I have such a wish to dance with you, Josephine." He drew on his gloves. "Will you allow me?" and he bowed to the lieutenant who politely returned his bow. "Would you like it?" he said to Josephine.

She was rather breathless after the rapid dancing; but her dark eyes beamed. "Yes," answered she, softly.

The floor was again crowded with dancers, so they stood a little and waited. But as there seemed no chance of better room he put his arm round her waist so as to start.

"It will never do!" whispered she.

"Oh, yes it will!" said he, and started off, passing by every one without either knocking

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them or letting himself be stopped; if there was danger he carried her rather than guided her past it. But soon he perceived that it was quite unnecessary; she bent and glided to the slightest pressure of his arm. They were not so alike that they quite suited, nor yet so unlike that they clashed; they became interesting for one another and enjoyed a moment's reconciliation before the fight. They looked at one another from time to time, always simultaneously, he very red, she very pale.

Now the lamps shone brightly, the music was lively, the people happy and unaffected, and the ball-room splendid. They had not danced together since the days when he was the first cavalier of the balls, and she a disagreeable school-girl whom he graciously condescended to dance a few turns with now and again. But the way they held themselves and kept time, their pace, too, it was all like one, their dancing was light and graceful, they were so happy. But all they were thinking about could not now be discussed while they thus held each other entwined; it had all somehow got mixed up. They belonged to one another with all the strong connecting power of their natures, especially now that the depth of that nature had been reached. All that seemed to separate them fell away like some foreign or chance element. And as all the life they had spent together had been in the days of their childhood, and in another country, they felt themselves carried back there by the recollection of it. In the burning heat over there, by sea and

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shore, they rode on their little ponies, one on each side of that strange father, he had always looked so well on horseback.

The brother—taller than his sister—looked down on her broad-shaped head, he seemed to see his father's head again. She thought about her father, too, when she looked up into his sharp-featured face. All the same, he was more like their mother than she was; she recognised again in him all that had been so clever and good in their mother, although it was largely mixed with the stormy elements that had been their father's. She could have lain in his arms as though he were her mother, sure of him to the very end, in fact, just like that last evening they were together in their own town on the bay. And in all the world she had no greater longing than this.

Then the waltz came to an end.

Arm in arm they walked to the place Lilli had invited them to; they felt warm and grateful. They met Lilli with the cavalry lieutenant, she quite done up on account of her being so stout. but he, as always, stiff, correct, and respectful.

Not long after this Kallem found himself in his overcoat, sealskin boots, his hands deep down in the huge pockets, and away out in the falling snow.

Either the brother and sister must now be left to themselves, or else he must leave. It had moved him greatly. He was very fond of her, and she, perhaps, even more fond of him. At this moment, when her spirit seemed to amal-

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gamate with his, everything was left to shape itself as it best could and would. Something evidently weighed her down in daily life; it could hardly be religion; but what was it then? She always did exactly as she pleased, without reference to any one; and yet she seemed to be more heavily burdened than most people.

It went on snowing and snowing; still there was light from the moon, although it was not visible. His sister seemed to be standing in the air in front of him, bare-armed and bare-headed, and with eyes of fire; in the distance he heard the music.

But when he found himself back in his own white bedroom, which the attentive servant had kept warm, then the dancing seemed all to be going on up in the forest district. There was Ragni borne along by the heavy wood-owner, so that she barely touched the floor with the tips of her toes; she whirled round with the small children, or hopped away with the "black-cock," or some dashing young fellow from the metropolis; he could see her delight after each dance, and could hear her: "Oh, how I am enjoying myself, Edward!" and so he fell asleep.

And the day after, just after he had dined alone and had gone into the big room from force of habit, for it was there that Ragni used to play for him, the door was opened and in came Ragni. He could hardly believe his own eyes! There she was, buried in all her furs! and he undid everything and dragged her out, plump, milk-white, and bewitching. He carried her off.

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"Oh, well," said she, when they had calmed down after a little, "it was just always the same thing over again up there and I longed for you."

"Your nose is crooked!"

"And you, who have been to a ball!"

"Your nose is crooked!"

"It is hardly seen. But do you know that Karl is not at all nice? I must tell you."

"Karl?"

"Oh, not to me! To me he is always delightful; you can't imagine how nice. But totally different to his brothers and sisters: hasty, fearfully hasty, and capricious, a self-opinionated gentleman."

"I can imagine that of him."

"Do you know that was why I came away. We will be alone now, may we not? We have always had him hanging over us."

"Well, I never! Are you now tired of him, too?"

"I never said that. But to have him always about us, it is—really—tiresome."

"Well, perhaps it is rather tiresome, that's true enough."

"Yes, but now listen to me, I am going to ask one thing more; but you must be good, and not call me an æsthetic!"

"Well, what is it?"

"Don't let Kristen Larssen know that I have come back. Please not! Let us really have a little peace."

"But I have just got some children who——"

"No, no! No children either! oh, no!" and she began to cry.

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"But my dear, darling Ragni——"

"Yes, yes, I know it is so selfish of me ; but I cannot do it ; it is not at all in my line."

Shortly after the piano was heard sending forth in chords of richest harmony a hymn of joy for her home-coming. Spirits of beauty took possession of the house. They flew up to the roof, to the windows and doors ; up to the bedroom, out in the kitchen ; into the office, singing, singing, singing all the while, so the tubercular bacilli that the doctor was studying danced straight away to meet the song that was to deal them their death-blow ; they sang right up to the kitchen door, so the whole scullery seemed to dance, the coffee-kettle boiled over and the new dress which Sigrid got as a Christmas present from her mistress, ready-made, with velvet trimmings, and an upper skirt looped up with cord and tassels, fell to thinking of balls and dancing, up there under the roof, the highest thing in all the house.

VIII

THE next day Kallem was coming away from Sissel Aune, the washerwoman. He had been annoyed with her husband, who, in the abundance of his joy, had got his violin strung again, played at all the merry-makings and feasts, and made himself quite drunk. He wished to try with him what he had tried with Sören Pedersen, and he went round there in order, with their help, to get hold of the lyrical Aune. But he found "wife Aase" alone in the shop, occupied in helping one of Sissel's children up into a saddle; four of them were in the shop, the fifth was lying in the next room. Sören Pedersen was not at home; he was with Kristen Larssen, who was ill. Kristen Larssen? Yes, he had had dreadful vomitings, at last nothing but blood came up; but he would not see or speak to the doctor. Kallem determined to go there at once, but first of all he would have given a little help toward the keep of the children here, but it was refused. That very day Aase had sold two sets of harness and a bed with a spring mattress; they now had in the workshop a niece of Aase's, a woman who was also called Aase; to distinguish them from one another, Sören called the latter "Aase's Aase."

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Kallem found Kristen Larssen in bed ; he had some work in his hairy hands, and Sören Pedersen was reading aloud to him. In the corner between the window and the table, pressed closely to the wall, sat his wife, knitting; her kerchief was pulled so far forward that the face was darkened. There was a very bad smell in the room. Kallem was much alarmed when he saw the sick man, he seemed thinner and more ashen grey than usual.

"Have you been eating many rich things this Christmas ?"

"Well, we had some brawn."

"Have you been ill in this way before ?"

"Oh, yes, now and then."

"Never as bad as this time," said she who was knitting.

"Do you feel any pain now ?"

"Not just now. But it comes and goes."

"Is it in the chest and stomach ?"

"Yes."

"And does the pain come often ?"

"Oh, yes."

"Oftener and oftener every day," was heard coming from the corner.

Kallem examined him and found a swelling the size of a walnut in the pit of the stomach; Kristen Larssen knew of its existence too.

"Has this grown larger ?"

"Oh, yes."

"It has grown very quickly," remarked she in the corner.

Kallem felt himself grow hotter and hotter. Why had he let himself be put off by the other's

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refusal of his help? The wife's eyes followed him about, her knitting-pins moved more slowly, she seemed to grow quite stiff; the doctor tried to keep a quiet countenance, but she was not to be taken in. Kristen Larssen's cold eyes also followed him about inquiringly. Kallem told them to open the register on the hearth and leave it open the whole time, day and night; their fire-wood would suffer, but that could not be helped.

Sören Pedersen got up and opened it with great eagerness. Both Kristen Larssen and his wife looked disapprovingly at him; the firewood did not belong to him.

To gain time and calmness Kallem took up the books that lay there; they were some of his own English ones, and there was also a work on mechanics; then he began staring at the little toy the sick man had in his hands.

"What is that?"

Sören Pedersen explained that it was an improvement on the knitting-machine that Kristen Larssen had invented. As he went on with the explanation little by little, Larssen's fingers touched the wheels and the pins with so dexterous and soft a touch that it was easy to see the power of his mind and his love for his work.

All over the room, on the tool-chest, on the floor, up on the table, were piled up things for mending, from watches and guns to sewing-machines, coffee-mills, locks, and broken tools. Kallem's revolver had been taken out of its case, and he heard now that it was the only thing that

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Larssen had repaired since Christmas. All this talk of Sören's was a respite for Kallem ; he knew now how he would manage. He spoke about diet and about medicine to relieve the pain, and asked Sören Pedersen to go with him to fetch the latter.

Hardly were they out in the street before Kallem said that there was no hope for Kristen Larssen ; this was undoubtedly cancer in the stomach, and very far advanced too.

The self-sufficient cunning in Sören Pedersen's round shining face disappeared by all sorts of back ways, his face was a blank whose doors and windows all were open.

"I shall soon be able to give a decided opinion and then you, who know him better than I do, will have to tell him." Kallem quite forgot to speak about Aune.

Within a very few days the whole of the little town knew that Kristen Larssen, the jack-of-all-trades, was dying of cancer in the stomach ; it was even in the papers. There they called him "an inventor and mechanician, well known in our districts." Not a house did Kallem go to, nor did he stop to speak to any one in the street, but they all asked after Kristen Larssen. When he went to see the sick man for the first time after Pedersen had told him what was the matter, there was not a word said about it. Larssen lay there with his invention in his hand, rather weak after a very severe bout of pain. His beard had been allowed to grow ; he looked awful. His wife was knitting, but rather nearer to the bed.

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The English books had been put away, but that was the only outward sign that all thoughts of the future had been given up.

From there Kallem went round by Sören Pedersen's, who told Kallem that the former porter at the hospital had been at Larssen's to try and convert him; he would not like him to go straight to hell. Larssen had only answered that he did not wish to be detained; he was occupied with something which was very near its completion. Then came the minister. He began in a nicer and more careful way; but perhaps just on that account did Larssen lose all patience; he gave vent to all his collected bitterness in words that stung, and the woman with the knitting-pins and the projecting kerchief placed herself near the door. The minister understood and went away meekly; he had never been the same man since that affair with mason Andersen. But among his congregation this caused a good deal of scandal.

After a meeting of the young men's association their choir assembled together outside Kristen Larssen's house and began to sing a psalm, very softly. Others joined them, but all quite quietly. It happened that it was just during one of the sick man's fits of pain; he said it was like the constant pricking of thousands of pins—and whilst he was in such pain the singing only irritated him. So Kallem had to interfere and forbid all such doings. Two lay-preachers, the former porter and one other went to the doctor at the hospital to explain to him that it had all been

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done in the best intention, and that it would not do to keep God's word from a dying man. Kallem lost his temper and answered rudely.

When he was down at Kristen Larssen's at the usual time in the evening he was certain he saw faces outside at the window. The sick man was just asking the doctor how long he had to live and if the pain would go on increasing, so Kallem took no further notice of what was outside except just asking to have something hung before the window. He was deliberating whether he should tell Kristen Larssen the whole truth, and he came to the conclusion that he might do so. He told him that it might last two or three months longer, and that the pain would become more frequent, although not every day equally often or equally violent. Larssen's wife stood by listening.

No one was standing by the window when Kallem came out, but a little farther up the street a lady was walking about slowly, as if she were waiting for somebody. When she saw him, she came straight up to him; it was his sister.

"Was it you looking in at the window down at Kristen Larssen's?"

"I," said she, and he saw her face turn red under her hood; "it is not my habit to peep in at other people's windows."

"Excuse me; but I really saw somebody do it."

"Well, yes, I did do it."

"Do you know them?"

"Yes. But I have come to speak to you, Edward. I knew you generally came about this time."

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"What do you want with me?"

It was only now he noticed how agitated she was.

"Is it true you have said you will take the responsibility on yourself of Larssen's going to hell?"

"I don't believe in hell one atom."

"No, but did you say that?"

"I don't know. No, I don't think I did."

"Well, you see, others have a different opinion to you. And they feel indignant when they hear such words. You will lose all you have gained here by your work if you talk like that, I can tell you that." Kallem felt this to be so thoroughly like her old self.

"Yes, I daresay it is wrong to say such things. But by heaven, it is wrong to torment a man like Kristen Larssen, too. As long as he has his powers of reasoning, no one will get him to believe in hell; so they may as well leave him alone."

"That is not what they want with him either."

"Indeed, what is it then?"

"You know just as well as I do, Edward, and it is for your own sake I beg you not to scoff at earnest and loving people."

"I have no wish to scoff; I only say that they can spare themselves the trouble, and spare him too."

"He is too cold."

"Cold or warm, such things depend on one's disposition and manner of living."

"But people can live themselves into a state of

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coldness of the soul, and that is what he has done."

"Maybe; but I know somebody who is warm enough, and who thinks exactly in the same way as Kristen Larssen. So it is not that."

"Well, what is it, then?"

"Thousands of things. She whom I allude to always puts her thoughts into pictures, and from the time she saw a very old drawing of the Trinity, a large body with three heads, and heard that the head in the middle was son to the two at the sides, the father and mother (for you know that the Holy Ghost began by being a woman), from that time she never could believe in the Trinity; she laughed at it. And as I said before, she is warm enough."

"Fie!" hissed out Josephine, in all the strength of her indignation; "she may be warm, but she cannot be pure!" Kallem felt a stab at his heart; she was aiming at Ragni! His sister was cruel, and looked cruel like in her school-girl days, and he too became again the boy of those days; bang! he gave her a box on the ear. It hit the hood, but it was heartily meant.

With flaming eyes she flew at him like in the days when they used to fight. She whispered: "I think you——!" she trembled with rage and scorn, then she turned full of contempt and left him.

Had any one seen them? They were alone in the street. He felt an indescribable fear; this might perhaps be visited on Ragni.

Kallem thought that the words "not pure,"

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coming from Josephine's mouth, were a hit at what had happened in former years; that was why he was so indignant. But what would he not have felt if he had known that she was rather aiming at their present life? When the minister and his wife came home and kept away from them, the reason was partly that Kristen Larssen, the scoffer and blasphemer, was received in Kallem's house, that Ragni gave him English lessons, and that Kallem had long conversations with him. For the majority of the congregation Kristen Larssen appeared to be a regular devil, and when any new arrivals, both men and women, sought his company (like the Sören Pedersens), it was a great offence. Soon after Karl Meek came to live with them, and from that time Ragni was never seen anywhere except in his society. To crown all, they travelled up together to the wood district; this was too much when it was a question of a divorced wife, who was both a freethinker and might be accused of breaking her marriage bonds.

Josephine had come with the well-meant intention of warning her brother. If she had been allowed to talk to him quietly, she would have told him all this; she was not afraid, and she was sincerely fond of him. But now she went back branded by his scorn.

Then all her pent-up passion burst forth! First and foremost, in bitterest hatred of her who separated brother from sister; but by degrees it turned to hatred of everything that caused it. The death of Andersen, the mason—the more her

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husband was upset by it, the more noticeable was the contrast between them—and at a particularly unfortunate time. All that Tuft complained of in himself was like making so many concessions to her, and now he intended to put an end to it. It could not have happened at a worse time.

In the house next to theirs lived a dried-up old woman, the minister's mother; she was always protesting against the other house. She never put her foot inside it at any party, and seldom otherwise except for family prayers, and when she dined there on church festival days. Her daughter-in-law's manner, her dancing, her dressing, and her friends were an abomination to her, and the minister's perpetual love-making she thought ungodly. The little boy became her spy. Josephine was sitting one summer day on the other side of the open door, and heard her questioning him as to who had been there the day before, what they had had for dinner, and if they had drunk much wine, and how many different kinds. "Grandmother asks me if mother is going out to-day, too," said he one day. "And she asks me what father says to mother when she comes home, and if father slept upstairs with us."

Josephine took it very quietly. But the knowledge that her mother-in-law was at the bottom of all the minister's religious admonitions, did not make her more inclined to give in. She intended to live as she thought fit; he might do the same.

For him, it was the struggle of his youth, from

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the time that he for her sake had given up the idea of being a missionary, and there was always the same result; he was so much in love that he was not master of himself. But not because she enticed him—just the contrary! When she sometimes became tired of him as of everything else—for there were sudden changes in her moods—it was then that she appeared to him most lovely and most to be desired, like the women of the old legends. He could make no resistance then.

But the great task that God had imposed on him by the sick-bed of his friend, that showed him what he had neglected in his life; now he would feel the fruits of remission.

Whilst he had, after much self-examination, made up his mind that he could speak to his wife, she had been keeping all her struggles secret. After the last battle, she had at once decided what was the fairest thing to do—revenge was what she always called justice—but soon, too, it became clear to her that her brother had seen through her own dubious conduct. From the moment she had danced with him, she felt that no one thought so much of her as he; but since their last meeting she had discovered that he despised her religious transactions. Indeed, he had every right to do so. She had never really counted the cost; she had always been content if her husband's faith and works were appreciated, if only she might be left in peace. Things could not continue like this; her brother's contempt was unbearable to her.

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There were morning and evening prayers in the minister's house ; grandmamma always came in, after her the maid-servants, and then the minister. Josephine did not always appear at morning prayers, and if they had any guests, evening prayers were given up. The minister always either began or ended with a prayer suitable to the occasion. At this period these prayers were lengthy and earnest, so Josephine stayed away altogether.

These solemn unctuous debates were her detestation, in public even more so than in private. The latter generally took place near bedtime, when their little boy was asleep and family worship was over ; if she knew it was coming, she went to bed ; he then seldom followed her ; it was slippery ground to tread on up there. But this evening he did come. She had heard him moving in the study, and she now heard him on the staircase. She did not lock her door, and she left the big lamp burning. But when he took hold of the handle, she exclaimed : " You must not come in."

" Why not ? "

" Not as long as I am undressing."

" I will wait."

He went down again and she began to undress slowly.

Their bedroom lay over the study and looked out to the garden ; to the right, through a curtain, was her dressing-room, just over the spare room ; to the left a door that led to another dressing-room. Beside this was a staircase leading from the passage by the study. She could hear him

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coming up for the second time ; she was now in bed. The door was in the middle of the room, just opposite the windows ; their beds stood to the right of the door, hers nearest to it. The little boy slept at the other side, near the dressing-room.

He did not inquire again whether he might come in, but just opened the door. She lay in her white nightdress, her black hair done up in the usual knot ; her head was propped by her left hand as if she were about to raise herself.

He sat down on the edge of her bed ; she at once moved slightly backwards, as if she did not like to come in contact with him. He looked very black. "Josephine, you avoid me ; it is not right of you ; I require comfort and advice. The old trouble is upon me, Josephine ; the day of reckoning cannot be postponed." He looked at her sorrowfully ; she looked back silently at him. "You know what is the matter with me. I live here at your side in affluence and comfort, and amongst my congregation in earnest worship. But a Christian does not grow in grace in this way. The other day I was weighed in the balance and found wanting." He hid his face in his hands and sat silently for some time, as though he were praying. "Dearest Josephine !"—he raised his head—"help me ! I must make an entire change in everything around me ; I must live and work in a different way."

"How so ?"

"I am not a true minister, and you are not truly a minister's wife ; the following of our own wills leads us astray !"

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"All these attempts of yours, Ole, to lead a different life commence with me and my house. Pray begin with yourself! I am as I wish to be; you can act as you think rightly yourself. As to our home, we only live as people of our means and tastes should do; if this does not suit you, well, you have your own private apartment to be in; you can arrange things as you like there. Should you prefer living separately, pray do so!"

"Yes," he answered, "I mean there must be a change in everything, even down to the household and the very bill of fare."

"I have not the slightest regard for these everlasting complaints of yours."

"That is because you do not understand the spiritual meaning."

She became quite pale. "I only know one thing," she answered him harshly, "that is, I refused to be as sensual as you were, and that was the beginning of it all."

"You never will let me hear the last of that. But I am not ashamed to confess that the first crisis arose from the cravings of nature and your resistance; that opened my eyes. I am not ashamed to confess this. For when I proposed a total reformation——"

"And pray, did I forbid this?" she said, interrupting him. "Yes, I forbade you to begin trying your reformations on me; try them on yourself, Ole!"

He got up. "You don't understand me, nor do you understand God's will with regard to us."

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I still hold there is a want of spirituality about you, Josephine ; you have never given yourself up entirely to repentance and prayer, you never consecrated your life to all absorbing worship ; your heart is not set on things above, only on the things of this world. You wish to be a Christian, but you do nothing to attain thereto. Why do you not answer ? Won't you try ? Now, together with me ? Josephine ? Oh, how I do suffer, also on your account ! " He seated himself humbly beside her again.

" Do you mean that I am to accompany you to the Zulus ? " she asked, coldly.

" I mean that we should perfect ourselves together in all good works, dear Josephine, and that then God will direct our steps."

" I can't listen to idle talk," she answered, " say right out what you wish us to do ! "

" We are to live amongst and for the poor, through faith in Jesus."

" Listen to me, Ole ; I know how to do that better than you do. You have never watched at night by the sick bed of some poor person ; I have often. And it is I who started the ' mutual association. ' " (This was the name of an association consisting of some of the well-to-do women of the town, where every member bound themselves to provide work and help for their own special poor ; Josephine was their leader ; she distributed the work.)

" Yes," her husband assented, " you have administrative talent—like your brother. But living in luxury one's self, and now and then

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condescending to visit the poor, it is not that ; no, one should live amongst and entirely for them."

"Shall we sell the house? Shall we move down to the poor part of the town? Tell me what your wishes are?"

"If God chooses us to do so, yes! But it must be done by and through faith, for Jesus' sake, Josephine, otherwise it is of no avail."

She answered not a word.

"What do you say to this, Josephine? Do you not wish us to try and lead a true Christian life?" his eyes were beseeching, his hand sought hers; "Josephine!"

She withdrew her hand. "No, you know, I cannot see why I should make my own life unpleasant; it would benefit no one, and only injure me."

"Do not say that! If only we could try! To believe in Jesus, and to live together only for the good of others."

"What nonsense! I can't help it, if it hurts your feelings; it is rubbish to say that one requires to believe in Jesus so as to help the poor. I don't care, I *will* say what I think."

"If you believed in Jesus, you would understand the reason why."

"I never said I did not believe in Jesus."

"Ah, Josephine, this kind of faith is worthless! You can't even fathom what real faith is? I am answerable for this shortcoming of yours; I who live year out and year in with you, and have got no further!" He bent down toward her; there

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were tears in his eyes. "How happy we might be together if you would but humble yourself before God—you who have such strength—and whom I love so dearly." He tried to put his arm gently round her.

"Faugh!" she exclaimed, and sat up.

He jumped up as though he were stung. She sat with flaming eyes—soon laid down again, both arms under her head; her bosom heaved, she was much agitated. "I do not know whether God will permit us to continue living together under these circumstances," he said.

"No, do just as you choose."

He turned from her, for he thought it beneath him to answer. The little boy groaned in his sleep and tossed uneasily. Tuft looked at him; the little fellow lay with his arm under him and half-open mouth; Tuft knew the forehead well, it was his father's over again, and was like his own too, the hair, the shape of the little hands and fingers, even to the very nails. But the day might come when even the boy would no longer be his own, if this continued.

"No, Josephine, things shall not continue in this way. God help us both; the struggle shall not end thus."

Behind the excessive goodness of his heart, all the breadth and strength of his nature became evident; she felt this. It moved her deeply. She heard him wandering up and down in his study, restless, but with a set purpose. She could not sleep.

The day after Kristen Larssen had become

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aware of the nature of his disease, he committed suicide. It shocked people dreadfully; he haunted the place; hardly any one dare pass the house. A rumour got abroad that Kallem had lent Larssen his revolver for this purpose; but it was put an end to by his wife, by Sören Pedersen, and by Kallem's own testimony.

Kristen Larssen had retired from this world without warning and without thanks. He had said to his wife that sudden death would be best. But neither had they come to any mutual agreement or reckoning, nor had they taken leave of each other. He had begged her to go and fetch Sören Pedersen, and whilst she was away, had crept out of bed and, with his usual cold-bloodedness, had done the deed.

The regular funeral rites were refused to him; a corner by the north wall was selected and three men worked hard to get a grave dug. The funeral day was unusually cold; some there were who fancied they saw the finger of God in that too. At quite an unusual hour, namely in the afternoon, Kristen Larssen was lowered into his grave without the toll of a bell, without priest or psalm. The most remarkable among the few people who were present was Aune, for he was drunk and fussing about everywhere—so thinly clad that it made one shiver to look at the poor wretch, blue with cold. Sören Pedersen told him several times to keep quiet; but to no avail. The only visible part of Sören's shining face was his nose, eyes, and a bit of the cheeks; all the

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rest was covered by a huge woollen comforter, wound round and round, and by a fur cap drawn well down to the eyes; his great big hands were in a pair of huge woollen gloves, of the kind that fishermen use for rowing; and his feet were in fur boots. Sören Pedersen had grown rather stout, his greatcoat was somewhat too tight; he looked like a lobster with all these excrescences; Aase, in a little cloak or hood, kept by the side of the widow, who stood there tall and thin, in Laplander shoes and loose ample dress, as wide at the top as at the bottom; she wore a heavy woollen shawl over her head; she evidently wished to conceal her face. Aune slouched round to tell her that he had been "to the station with her luggage." And now "he had shut up the house; he had the key in his pocket;" he took it out and showed it. The poor widow was to go direct from here to the station, and stay with some of her relations who lived at a few miles distance; and later, go on to her native town. Besides these four there were two of the sextons present; one of them stood with short coat and mittens, leaning on his spade, incessantly chewing tobacco; the other was almost covered by a brown beard, crook-backed, and dim-eyed.

There was a tightly packed snow-drift under the wall; Karl Meek and Ragni came along together and got up on to the snow-drift. They were all waiting for Kallem, who had been detained, but now came along at full speed. He took off his cap to the widow, and was greeted by the others as he went up to the grave. He wished

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to say a few words, but waited to see if nothing else would happen. As nothing did happen, he said :

"I am not acquainted with the past life of the man we are about to bury; neither did I know him well personally. He had different religious convictions to those of the people he lived amongst, and he has been punished for them. His and his wife's object in life was to be able to go to free America." (At the word America there was a general movement amongst the handkerchiefs.) "He tried to teach himself English; for him it would have been like getting wings.

"But having said this much, and when I add that he was the cleverest man I have met with here, I have said about all I know of him.

"Therefore I cannot join in judging him. I often had the impression, whilst we sat together, that he was always cold. The cold around him had chilled him to the bone.

"It so happens that only we five or six people are here to take a last farewell of him. Yet all those who benefited by his ingenious work, most particularly those whose life has been eased by his clever inventions, thereby affording them greater enjoyment, all those owe him thanks, which I am here to express."

A deep stillness ensued; one could hear the snow creak when any one moved: but no one attempted to leave. At last Aune reeled forwards to the edge of the grave. "Well, at least I will thank you for the violin! Oh—and the forgiveness of sins, oh, oh, fare thee well!"—within an

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ace he had fallen into the grave. In great disgust Sören Pedersen seized him by the arm, turned to his wife, and said: "Dearest Aase, you say the Lord's Prayer so beautifully; let us have it!" And she stepped forward, pulled off her mittens, and folded her hands. The men took off their caps and bowed their heads; and then Aase repeated the Lord's Prayer.

The first heavy lumps of earth were then thrown on to the coffin; it sounded as though it were being crushed.

Kristen Larssen's wife came up to Kallem. He could now observe her close by, suffused in tears, worn out by want of sleep; she had lost nearly all her strength, and her last hope; but she took his hand with a firm grasp, gazing at him with sorrow-stricken eyes, she nodded with suppressed feeling, she could not speak. No one could have received warmer thanks. Ragni was much startled when she likewise took her hand, for she knew she did not deserve it. The widow hurried past the others and went down toward the town, Sören Pedersen and Aase had much difficulty in keeping up with her. But Ragni clung to Kallem's arm, she would have liked to have hung round his neck, and wept bitterly.

IX

KRISTEN LARSEN's house remained without a tenant, no one cared to either buy or rent it ; the gloom that had fallen over it spread even to his friends. It was lucky for Sören Pedersen that his customers were principally from the country, and not from the town, otherwise it would have fared badly with him. Ragni did not know that she was more watched and talked about now than ever ; she was not at all careful. The very fact that the minister's family refused all intercourse with them, made her a target for evil tongues ; her character could not bear any more.

She was quite defenceless against the things they accused her of, as she did not know what they were. If she and Karl Meek held each other's hands on the ice ; or if he made her laugh whilst putting her skates on ; or if she tried to push him off when they stood each on one of the runners behind the doctor's sledge ; or if they ran together with the hand-sledge, or played duets for some visitors—some one had always noticed a look that could not be mistaken, heard words that had some hidden meaning, or seen liberties taken that only those could take who

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were accustomed to take still greater ones. It was so with the last lodger, now again with this one; what else could Kallem have expected? It was only his just punishment.

Sören Kule's relations were the ring-leaders; they were numerous in this part of the country, and had fertile imaginations—particularly about immoral things.

It was choice to hear Lilli Bing describe how Ragni Kule that was, went in "every evening" to the student Kallem's room; it was in the same passage. "Dear me, what harm could there be in that, as they loved each other? Who could have gone on living with that disgusting Sören?"

She insinuated that Kallem's present wife did not even require to cross the passage. One of her remarks was, "What harm can there be in it, as she never gets children?"

How was it that none of those whom it concerned never heard anything? That none of the usual anonymous letters ever reached them? The first can only be explained by the fact that they scarcely ever associated with any one, and the second, that people probably thought that Kallem would not take the least notice of them; free-thinkers generally have rather loose ideas about morality. Toward the beginning of spring, Kallem was seen accompanying his wife and Karl Meek to the steamer; they were to cross to the other coast; he was seen to fetch them again on the pier, Monday forenoon. They knew that he was out all day, and that the other two were

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together in the house and garden all day long.

Karl's examination went off satisfactorily, but of course with much anxiety; the day was near at hand when he was to leave them. On the whole, it had been pleasant to Ragni to have him there, but his unstability gave her much trouble, and his passionate nature grew with his bodily strength. His great devotion to her kept this in subjection; but the way it often showed itself was a great trial to her; she loved stability and peace. She prophesied that the day would come when things would not go well with him; he carried too much canvas.

She longed to be able to be alone again; she said so to Kallem, who teased her by saying that in three weeks she would have to do without Karl. He was first to be at home for the summer holidays, but from there travel down to Germany to study music. Although he had accustomed himself to live and think under Ragni's eye, in strife with her, in subjection to her, in constant adoration; still he liked the idea of being independent. The separation would not be difficult.

But it so happened that, on one of the last days, he was at a friend's house—the only one he now and then saw since he came to the Kallems—and in speaking of his departure, his friend said:

"How do you stand with regard to Kallem's wife?"

Karl did not grasp his meaning, and began singing her praises ecstatically. The other interrupted:

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"Yes, I know all about that ; but to make a clean breast of it, are you her lover ? People say so."

Karl asked how he dared say such a thing ? He should be answerable for his words ! But it was his friend's intention seriously to warn Karl ; he had only just heard the report himself, it had not got about much yet. He bore Karl's raging patiently, and told him that he could scarcely expect otherwise than that people would think there was something in it, as they had been so very imprudent.

They could not at all understand at the Kallems what was the matter with Karl, all of a sudden. He had hardly been in to them the last few days, was seldom at home, and had become every bit as silent, shy, and gloomy as when he first came. The probability was that he was in despair at the prospect of parting from them, and especially from Ragni ; but it was strange that this despair should have begun exactly between three and five o'clock on Wednesday afternoon. At three o'clock they had played duets together and had been in the best of spirits ; at five o'clock she had fixed to go through some of the last remaining work for his examination with him, but he came home so hopelessly absent and inattentive, that they were obliged to give it up. From that day he had been always like that. Kallems teased Ragni, and told her the youth was in love ; it had come over him suddenly, just before the "bitter hour of parting." Kallems sang : "Two thrushes sat on a beech-twig," and prophesied that she would

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very shortly receive a declaration, probably in verse ; he himself had done the very same in his day. Maybe he would shoot himself. She need not imagine that any one at his age could escape the charms of her crooked nose without a little heart-chill.

When the youth sat staring down on her in alarming silence, neither eating nor uttering a word ; when he played in the most melancholy style, and always left them to seek solitude ; then Kallem said : "How black is life !" He imitated the youth's languishing eyes at her, went sighing upstairs, passing his hands through his hair and crying. But to Karl himself he was excessively kind.

When the hour of parting came, there was an end to all joking, for Karl was in such a state of despairing grief that no one could speak to him ; they only tried to hurry him away. Ragni would not go with them to the station, his exaggerated manner quite alarmed her. But when Karl saw that she was still standing on the steps, he jumped down from the carriage and rushed up to her again. She retreated, but he followed her, looked at her, and cried so bitterly, that the servant who stood a little behind them felt so sorry for him, that she began to cry too. Ragni remained cold and silent ; she could have no idea that Karl was then doing the noblest deed he had done—feeling more deeply than ever before in his life.

There were people at the station who noticed his great despair, as well as Kallem's serious face. Especially did they notice that Ragni was

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not of the party. Had Kallem heard anything?

This conclusion to their intercourse with Karl Meek left an uncomfortable feeling. They did not willingly speak about him; in fact, they both felt a doubt as to whether they had done right in having him in the house: they ought to have foreseen that it would end like that. But nothing was said about this either by one or the other of them. Their own life together drew them closer and closer to each other; never before had Kallem been so much at home, or taken such an interest in all her doings.

The whole summer was devoted to the "fever pavilion;" they were never tired of watching the building, or of seeing it all arranged and put in complete order. And now that all the summer tents stood there, the good arrangement and order of the hospital was quite the talk of the place.

But whilst they were thus alone, dividing their time between the hospital, their studies, the garden, and the piano; indeed, just because they were alone, something seemed to affect all their moods, something they had both thought of for long, and that grew and grew for that very reason that they never mentioned it. Soon they could hardly be together without fancying they read something about it in the other's eyes.

Why could they have no children? Was the fault Ragni's? Would she do nothing in the matter?

By degrees he had found out that she was too

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shy to allow of his being the one to mention it. Would she not venture to speak about it herself? Not even show a wish to say something, so that he could help her out with it? What was the reason? Was it terror of an examination—an operation? He seldom saw her now without feeling that she was thinking about it. And she for her part thought: he misses a child.

The end of August, Ragni got a great big letter with the Berlin postmark on, from Karl Meek! It was most welcome to both of them, more than they would at first allow.

Karl had been to the festival at Bayreuth, he depicted his impressions in glowing colours and enthusiastic language. The whole letter was taken up by that, and four or five lines of thanks and greetings—and at the end a question: "May I be allowed to write to you again?" They both felt at once that the real letter consisted of these four or five lines, all the rest was just an intellectual envelope. Kallem quite approved, and was anxious that she should begin a correspondence with him; it might in more ways than one benefit him while he was abroad.

Without feeling particularly inclined—as had often been the case when she and Karl studied together—but more in a spirit of obedience and good nature, she sat herself down and wrote humorously, as she got over it best in that way, and had an answer from him—first one, then another, long, long letters, whole diaries.

Ragni was in the garden one day, early in October, gathering fruit and things for the kitchen.

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She went across to the railing by the church road as a carriage came driving slowly upwards. A very stout man sat on the seat, swaying about with the jolting of the carriage, like milk in a pail. Ragni's pigeons were winging their homeward flight from the church roof and flew just over the carriage; the peculiar flapping of the wings made him turn his head in the direction they were flying. "Are those pigeons?" asked he, and the coachman answered.

Ragni was just going to climb up on a ladder to gather some apples, but she had to hold fast; that heavy voice, that drawling dialect, and that north-country monotony, all that belonged to Sören Kule! His blind eyes were partly turned to where the pigeons were, and partly to where the answer had come from, as he was driven slowly rumbling away.

Sören Kule here? Surely a blind, half-paralysed man does not go travelling about? The inheritance which twice had fallen to his share, could it be that, that had brought him here?

Shortly after, Kallem arrived. She saw directly that he too had met Kule, and he saw at once that she had retreated into the big room to hide herself; they met there, she laid her head on his shoulder; it seemed to her there were evil spirits in the air.

Kallem said to himself: If Sören Kule has come to take possession of one of the places bequeathed to the family, and is going to move up here, then Josephine must have had a hand in it; her "spirit of justice" has been on the alert.

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The only person in the whole world whom he thought he had not treated well, and to whom he had not tried to make amends, was this blind man.

I will go and seek him out, he thought ; I will speak openly with him. I can at the same time make it clear to him, that for Ragni's sake he must not remain here.

He soon heard where Kule lived : in the house just behind theirs : in the park, next to the hospital !

So this share of the inheritance had fallen to him ; and were they to have him here every day ?

He walked about a long time trying to gain some control over himself ; but when he stood in front of the house, he was still so indignant that he had difficulty in keeping calm. It was a little stone house two stories high and with a garden in front ; in the passage he could hear sounds of washing up from the kitchen, and looked in there first. There stood the Norland giant kitchen-maid with tucked-up sleeves, as unchanged as if they had parted yesterday. As the door opened, she looked over her shoulder and recognised directly the tall man with the spectacles, with hooked nose and bushy brows ; she smiled and turned round to him. " Surely that is Kal-lem ? " she sang out.

" Yes."

" I was told yesterday that you lived here," she smiled still more.

Oh, you sly fish, thought he, you have known it a long time.

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"When did you come here?"

"We came yesterday."

"From Kristiania?"

"From Kristiania; Kule has inherited this house, and folks say living is cheap here." A door opened at Kallem's back, he turned round; a squarely built man with small, clever, but suspicious looking eyes, put his head cautiously out at the door. Kallem shut the kitchen door, the other then came quite forward and shut the room door: so they stood opposite to each other. But the kitchen door was opened again, and the Norland servant girl looked out and smiled to the man. Kallem guessed there was some sweet secret.

"Is that your husband?"

"Yes, since last summer." The man looked like a sailor.

"Can I see Kule to speak to?"

The square man put on a very solemn expression; he would go in and ask. He stayed away a long time, Kallem heard them arguing, now Kule's monotonous drawl, now the other's short, dry Trondhjem dialect, both voices lowered. Meanwhile Oline told him all about her husband, that he had been pupil at a seminary, had passed a mate's examination, spoke Spanish, and was now Kule's secretary and right hand. Then she told him about the "children," that they were at Fru Rendalen's school in the west country; though for that matter, said she, the school belongs no longer to Fru Rendalen, but to the son, "who used to live with us."

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And then all at once : "And your wife ? How is your wife ? So you made her your little wife, eh ? Oh, how delightful it will be."

The door was opened, the square man stood aside and let Kallem pass in to Kule. He sat in the very same big roller-chair, with the same board before his legs, with the same Spanish pictures round him, the same furniture, only it had another and very faded covering. The piano and the children's toys were missing.

The man himself was very grey and had grown much stouter. The "swimmers" lay as usual on the arms of the chair ; a long pipe stood beside him, quite empty.

Kallem gave his name ; Kule did not answer, but a slight movement of the healthy hand and some deep groans showed that he was agitated. Kallem too had difficulty in keeping quiet. To cut short the agony, he remarked at once, that Kule was perhaps not aware that they were neighbours ?

Yes, he was.

"I should not have thought so," replied Kallem, clearly showing by his tone of voice what he thought.

Kule was silent.

"Shall you remain living here ?"

"Yes."

Kallem looked at the blind countenance ; it was cold and impenetrable. Kallem felt it would be useless to expect him to have a shadow of regard for Ragni ; he was seized with a terrible loathing. "Then I have nothing more to say," said he, and got up.

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The kitchen door stood ajar. "Be so good as to give my respects to your wife!"

It was only when he found himself outside that Kallem remembered the original object of his visit; but Kule's increased brutality freed him from any obligation. Consequently, in future he was to be their neighbour. They must therefore try and bear their own past, as others did. He hurried on, away from the town; he dared not at once go home. She could not bear anything bad or wicked in any shape whatever; he must think over the best way of taking this.

When he at last reached home again, Ragni was in the office and had lit the lamps there. At once she read her doom in his face—ay, had even heard it in his footstep. She sank down in her chair and felt as though there never more could be any happiness in life.

He tried to make it clear to her that, as she was not to blame, she ought not to be afraid; she shook her head, for it was not that. No, it was the cruelty of it, that was what she could not stand; the cold chillingness. She reminded him of what he himself had said by Kristen Larssen's grave.

But surely they could not compare themselves to Kristen Larssen? They had so much of all that gave warmth. Yes, certainly—but a good name! "In depriving me of that, they shut out all warmth." And again, in a little while: "This is the cold chill." She did not weep, as she usually did.

"Then we will go away from here!" exclaimed Kallem.

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As though she had long since been considering the matter, she answered: "What doctor is rich enough to buy up all that you have sunk in this place? And your work? Work that you live for and that gives you so much happiness? No, Edward!"

"But I can do nothing, if you are going to be unhappy," and he kissed her. She did not answer.

"What are you thinking of?"

"Yes, I believe you can."

"What is it that I can?"

"Work and be happy without me," answered she, and burst into tears. He folded her in his arms and waited quietly; she must feel that she had wounded him. "In reality I am not suited to you."

"But, Ragni dear!"

"Oh, yes, as your good friend and comrade, the best you have in the world; would that I might be it for long!"

She pressed closer in to him, as though wishing to put a seal on his silence.

X

THE next day was foggy. Although Ragni had slept well and dreamlessly, her head felt heavy and she went about in the same cheerless way as yesterday ; there was no longer any gloss on anything. At first she would not even go to the kitchen ; she imagined that from the window there she could see the house where Kule lived. However, she had doubts about it and ventured out ; she could not see it. Then she dared not go for her morning round in the garden ; he might come driving past. At last she sat down to the piano, but got up again without playing. Then she wrote a letter to Karl ; she owed him an answer to two of his, and she must occupy herself with something. She wrote according to the mood she was in, that all kinds of wickedness, lying, treachery, double dealing, arbitrary persecution, cunning, deceit, were like a death-chill. It was that we had to fight against ; for life is warmth. Some people were more susceptible to cold than others ; just as some could suffer from tubercular disease, and others not, and she was surely one of those unfortunate ones. From the time she was a child she had been exposed to many a cold chill,

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and at last this rush of cold air was stronger than when her powers of resistance ; this was the whole question.

It was not a long letter ; for in thinking of her childhood and of all she had gone through later on, until her marriage with Kule, she felt a desire to write it all down, and, when the occasion offered, to give it into Kallem's faithful keeping. She could not tell it him by word of mouth ; but could she write it ? Yes, now she could. A vague fear urged her on, and she began that same day.

She summoned up all her strength to enable her to be calm and collected when Kallem came home. He looked searchingly at her, but was himself in a great state of excitement about something fresh and quite different. He was about to perform an operation that both the other doctors, and a third who had been called in from some distance, thought doubtful.

One of the most highly thought of men in those parts, a Colonel Baier, had suffered for more than a month from inflammation of the coat of the stomach with symptoms of septicæmia. The military surgeon, Dr. Arentz, was his family doctor, and treated him in the usual way, with water compresses and opium. But the illness was a serious one, and Arentz wished that Kallem should join in the consultation. The wife was opposed to this—not exactly because she was a zealous Christian, but because she had an uncomfortable feeling when with Kallem. She was a good, warm-hearted creature, but hysterical, and such people are generally either violently for, or

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violently against, one. Tuft, the minister, had once saved her ; she was ill from sheer weakness, nothing did her any good, until he came and roused her will by faith—a fact none could dispute ; since then she raved about him.

The doctor from the neighbouring district, together with Dr. Kent, were both sent for ; but both were honest enough to say that nothing could be done, the colonel was rapidly dying, and an operation would be impossible.

But now her love for her husband proved stronger than her antipathy for Kallem ; she had the horses put to the carriage and drove herself to fetch him ; he was willing to perform the operation and at once. Without allowing himself to be over-ruled by the others' objections, he opened the abdominal cavity, discovering therein pus, and also opened the large intestine.

This incident called for all his strength of character, especially as the others had been so opposed to it. The colonel was looked up to and respected by all ; all were interested, both in town and country, and his wife's state was such that, should the husband die, she would go out of her mind. From having disliked Kallem, she grew to have the most unbounded confidence in him ; his presence seemed to magnetise her. Kallem, was of course, very anxious.

Ragni found other things to think of besides herself when she saw in what a state of anxiety and responsibility he was in before the operation, and it was even worse the first few days after. In such like emergencies she would always keep

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all petty trifles from him with rare tact, encouraging and pleasing him, living solely and entirely for him. To be allowed to be something for such a man as that, that in itself spread "warmth" enough!

The colonel recovered, Kallem went about in the best of humours, Ragni took up her playing again, and all her usual work, even ventured out into the garden and allowed her eyes to wander to the house up yonder! She heard the carriage rumbling past without trembling more than the least little wee atom; she was accosted by the Norland servant going to market with her basket, and although she felt it was like being stung by a snake, yet she survived it. One day she even managed to talk to her—and accustomed herself to expect her coming every morning without making her escape. This was not because she was courageous, far from it; but she did it, and felt more at her ease.

The weather changed to severe cold; the leaves blew about in the north wind, the fields were frozen and covered with hoar-frost every morning, the stoves burnt with a roaring noise rivalling the rumbling of carts and carriages outside on the hollow-sounding frosty ground. Each day there was a suggestion as to putting in double windows and shutting up the balcony doors; each day it was put off. There might possibly still be some fine days.

One day she had had letters from America, from Norland, from Berlin—the latter was from Karl; she had opened them all, but had not read

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any of them ; there was too much to do getting the house ready for the winter. Still she found time to read her sister's letter in the afternoon, and it troubled her ; her sister was not well ; Ragni thought about getting her down to stay with her. The last two or three letters from Karl had been decidedly home-sick ones, he felt so melancholy ; so she had no particular wish to peruse this last letter. She was just then reading an American novel, one of Howells' best, an impressive and exciting soul-picture ; so she sat down to that first when she went into the office toward evening. But something in the story reminded her of Karl, so she laid the book aside and took out his letter. As usual, page upon page, very interesting, but so thoroughly heart-sick. When she came to the last sheet, there was written on it in red ink : " Read this when you are alone ! "

He wrote : " From the moment I received your letter about the ' chill cold of wickedness,' I have been uncertain whether or no I would tell you that I understood it at once. For long I have known what was said about us. Such a cruel slander ! It was this that nearly drove me mad last summer, when I heard of it just before we parted. Is it not terrible ? I thought that there could not possibly be anything that would wound me deeper than this ; but now it has come : you have heard of it too—that must be the meaning of your letter.

" For weeks I have thought about it. But it is better, for my own sake and for yours, that we should speak about it ! Do not let Kallem hear

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of it ! I am so dreadfully ashamed, I am so unhappy—ah, if you knew how unhappy I am ! but let us spare him !

“Therefore I write this on a separate sheet, and will always do so in future.

“Also on account of something else which I am now coming to, my dear, my darling !

“From the very beginning when you were so good to me, you were most dear to me ; I could not think that you or any one could be more dear. But now we are as it were linked together by this shame and grief, we two must bear it alone, and now, God knows, I only live, suffer, and work in thought of you. You are ever with me, from morn till eve, and in my dreams at night.

“I love you, love you, love you ! I write this weeping. I love you, love you, love you !

“Perchance this word shocks you, shocks you more than what has gone before and has called it forth. But if you knew what joy it is just to write it down and know that you will read it ! You are so good, and you know that I have the most unbounded respect for you.”

When Kallem came home at eight o'clock, the supper table was laid in the dining-room ; the lamps were lighted in the office, and it was warm ; but both rooms were empty, the big room was dark. Sigrid came in with the tea, and told him that her mistress had gone to bed.

To bed ? was she ill ?

“I think she was only tired.”

Kallem went upstairs directly. It was dark ; but he saw in the moonlight a white arm in a

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night-gown stretched out toward him. "Forgive me," she said; "but I felt so tired, and then there was a letter from my sister which made me sad. No, don't light the candles! It is so nice like this."

What a fresh and healthy atmosphere there was about him, his voice was so strong as he answered: "From your sister?"

"Yes, she does not thrive up yonder."

"Suppose we get her down here?"

"I was just going to ask you for that. How good you are!" and she began to cry.

"But, my darling, why do you cry? I assure you the only reason why I did not speak of it sooner was that you wanted so much for us to be alone."

"Yes, of course it is delightful. But supposing one of us were to be ill?"

"Nonsense, we are not going to be ill. You are strong now, too. Your head is rather hot. Let me feel your pulse! Oh, it is nothing but rest that you need. It was right of you to go to bed. I shall go down and have my supper, I am ravenous; then you can be quiet. You had a letter from Karl?"

"Yes, it is lying on the desk."

"All right, I shall read it while eating. After that I must be busy. Good-night!"

He kissed her, she put both her arms round his neck, drew him down to her, and kissed him. "You darling!"

He went away; she heard his quick step on the stairs and going to the room door; heard him open and shut it.

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Again there was that pain in her chest which his coming had dispelled, his very footstep scared away. It was something oppressive, dreadful, unheard-of, something she would never get rid of, and then she began to shiver. Cold, cold, cold ; now it had reached to the very innermost. She felt now, with a shudder, why "the whale" had come and taken possession of the little house close by, and would not ever leave it. Now she knew why the others had allowed it.

"Alas ! what has happened, what have I done ?" moaned she, and tried to hide from herself. Karl's words of love sounded like a whispering voice amid thundering billows. Poor boy ! She lay there in the dark that she might not be seen, and in order to think it over. What ought she to do ? She had kept back that last sheet, ought she to show it to Kallem ?

When Kallem came up to bed shortly after twelve, she had fallen asleep in the midst of all her sorrowful reflections. He lighted the candle behind her, looked into her face, and listened to her breathing. She was sleeping innocently, open-mouthed.

The next morning she walked backwards and forwards before the south side of the house, equally terrified, equally undecided. There had been snow, but it was nearly all melted again ; it was the first snow that winter. A thick fog lay over the mountain ridges, so thick that it looked like a separate, impenetrable country, bordering on the mountains and stretching as far as the eye could reach. A long tongue of this strange

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country juttet out into the wood like a secret of utmost importance. She felt cold, she could not go far without being seen by people on the road, and to-day she could not let herself be seen, perhaps never again.

A useless fight that, among the different kinds of trees round about the farms. Furthest away from the houses a forest of firs ; it looked almost black through the heavy mist ; nearer to the houses a wood of leafy trees began, long-necked aspen and twisted birch, showing light yellow against the dark ; nearer still there was mountain-ash and bird-cherry, blood-red in colour ; maple, too, and other trees in endless variety of shades, from colourless as flax to deep red-gold. Tall asps and alders, too old to bear foliage, spread their naked branches out over the bright colours of the others like blue-grey smoke.

She stamped her feet, but could not get any warmth into them ; she would not go further, nor yet go in before she had decided what she was to do ! What if Kallem did get to know of it ? And what if he did not ?

The meadows were divided in two by ploughed fields. Besides that there were only dull green fields of rye, sown in harvest-time, clover-fields in stubble. But see those discontented grey-looking fields further away from the houses, that are never noticed except when they are to be plundered ; there are too many of them in the country.

But Juanita ? How did she get into this harvest picture ? The freshest, clearest reminiscence of that first spring ? Ah, now awoke her longing

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for the children. Now she was sure that he was not where they were ; so she could travel down to Rendalen's and see them.

As long as that lasted she would not be forced to decide what was the right thing to do ; and she needed a respite. Just a short little letter to Karl Meek, that he must not write to her oftener just now, perhaps later on ; she would let him know. These few words to Karl—should she telegraph them ? Not from here ! But she would start at once and telegraph on her way.

There arose in her a purpose, a command as strong as though she had nothing left for her to do but to see the children once again. When Kallem came home soon after, and she was pacing up and down the floor to try and get her feet warm, she said to him that she must see the children again, and it seemed to him that the recollection of her life together with Kule had turned into a longing for the children ; this was very natural. "Start at once !" said he ; "later on it may be too cold." He did not quite mean it to have been to-day ; but that was what she wished, and in the afternoon he took her to the station.

As soon as she arrived at the Rendalens, she wrote a despairing letter, the meeting with the children had been terrible ; they did not know her ! And she, too, hardly recognised them ! They were certainly well-brought-up children, but not as though they had belonged to her sister ; there was no family likeness there, but a likeness to him, the father—he came of a stronger race. They

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were big, fat children ; they stared at her without being able to understand her. And all the other strange faces, always noticing and watching her. She would have gone home again directly, if she had not had such a very bad cold. Her next letter was a little more cheerful ; not because she was better pleased with the children — they were just like strangers and were wanting in “spirituality” ; each time she took them into her room to talk to them, or play for them, she could feel that it bored them. But her intercourse with the excellent people at the school and in the neighbourhood afforded her great pleasure ; “if only we had something similar,” said she, with a sigh.

He had a letter from Rendalen, too, expressing, in strong terms, the delight of the entire little colony at having her amongst them. He put forward “an unanimous request” to be allowed to keep her for a time ; she seemed tired after her journey and not very well ; it would be good for her to have a rest.

She remained away a fortnight altogether. She came home again one cold day in mid-winter, looking pale, having still a bad cold, and very nervous, incapable of saying how dreadful it was for her to be again amongst people who looked upon her as an improper person. Kallem was alarmed at her cold and at her looking so ill ; their meeting could hardly be called a meeting, there was an anxious examination of her chest, a languid account of her visit ; she was tired and wished to go to bed.

Kallem asked if she had had any letter from Karl.

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None had been received here. No, she had had none either. Had she not written to him? No, Karl had confided a secret to her which she did not approve of. Often before there had been, so to speak, knots on the thread, which had only been explained to him later, and now, as she did not look up at her husband, he felt that he ought not to ask questions.

She was in bed several days. There was no getting rid of a nasty dry cough she had; otherwise there were no dangerous symptoms; none at all. The first day she was up he thought she had grown very thin; her face had a tired, delicate expression, and there were dark rings under her eyes. She longed for fresh air, but she refused, in the most determined way, to go for any walks outside the garden. At first she said it was so tiresome; when that excuse did not hold good, she hit upon a better one: she began to cry. He thought this was a strange symptom; was it possible that she was in the family way? He comforted himself with this hope and waited. She went for walks in the garden, and then told him about them with much pride; but she hid from him the fact that she always went out at dusk. Meanwhile she herself thought she was better, and he fancied so too.

Time went on; he was expecting that which he longed to hear, and thought he noticed other symptoms; but he was alarmed too sometimes, as she seemed to him to grow thinner and thinner; he could not get her to eat. One evening, when he was out, she had as usual gone into the garden and

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walked about at dusk, had felt a chill afterwards, and great oppression on the chest! She was asleep when Kallem went to bed, but he was awakened later by her coughing. He lit the light and saw that she pressed her hand to her chest.

"Have you a pain there?"

"Yes."

"Where is the pain?"

"Here!" and she pointed to the right collar bone.

"Does it hurt you there when you cough?"

"Yes." And at that moment she was seized with a violent fit of coughing. He got up, dressed himself, put fire in the stove, rang the bell for the servant to fetch him some medicine, and then sounded her chest, asking her many questions. She told him about the chill she had had that evening, and that she was in the habit of taking her walks at dusk.

"At dusk!" exclaimed he, and that was sufficient to make her hide her face. She must promise him now to be good and not do such things any more; she would have to stay in bed now for several days. She did not relish the mustard-plaster on her chest; but the cough lozenges were a success. He concealed his distress by joking and by petting her—and in a few days she did actually seem as well as he could expect. And now she had become so obedient; she kept in the house quite quietly for a fortnight. Her cough was less frequent; those violent fits of coughing had made her chest so sore; but, on the whole, she felt tolerably well, only very tired

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and breathless; feeling as if she had no wish to touch the piano.

A path was made for her in the garden, and she went out there for the first time with Kallem in the middle of the day, but went in again almost directly. At first he was frightened, seriously alarmed; but then from her manner he concluded it was only a little capriciousness. However, she felt weaker even than she would allow. The next day she tried together with Sigrid; but after the first few steps she became so breathless that she was obliged to stop and rest; she begged Sigrid not to tell; it would pass over when she "had more practice." The weather was mild, in the middle of the day there were even a few degrees of warmth, and she felt better, could walk further; Kallem was delighted when he saw one day that she had opened the piano.

One evening Sören Pedersen appeared, pale and by himself—two very unusual things. What was the matter? The matter was that Kristen Larssen's ghost haunted the place! Kallem shouted with laughter, but Sören's face never altered; it was quite true that Kristen Larssen's ghost had been seen! The latter years of his life Kristen Larssen had never played the violin; he gave it to Aune. But now he plays the violin, and in his own house! Did nobody live there? No, the house was shut up; but all the same he played! Several people had heard it; there was not the slightest doubt. It must be some lover of practical jokes who had got in there. Who kept the key?

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"A nephew of the widow."

"And who may that be?"

"Aune."

"There we have it!"

"But Aune has himself helped to search the house; and Aune is the most frightened of the lot."

A servant, whose child was ill—Kalle knew her, he was her doctor—had seen Kristen Larssen one night when she was out, vanishing along by the wall of the house! Since then several others had seen it. "No one doubts it," said he. What did the doctor think of this, that the colonel's wife went into the saddler's shop one day to tell them that she had dreamt she saw Kristen Larssen sitting in a long room, amongst many clever and learned men who were all being taught to spell. She had felt drawn to tell Søren Pedersen this, as it was Kristen Larssen who had led him astray. "And will you believe it, doctor, that very night both Aune and I had dreamt that the colonel's wife came to the shop!"

"Now I will tell you something just as strange, Søren Pedersen. The first day that my wife and I were here in the town, we met Andersen, the mason, Karl Meek, Kristen Larssen, Sigrid, you and your wife, all in the course of a quarter of an hour!"

Søren Pedersen rolled his round eyes about in a stupid sort of fashion; there was nothing so very strange in that.

"Not at all; for the other hundred people we took no notice of. Just as you, Søren Pedersen,

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never think about the hundreds of people you and Aune dream of without seeing them come to the shop the following day."

This did not convince Sören Pedersen.

Superstition was afloat. One person followed the other's lead ; the whole town soon talked of nothing else, and particularly after the minister was mixed up in the affair. He had lived alone with his mother since the spring. His wife and child had been away, and had only returned quite recently. During all this time his preaching had increased in severity, latterly it had had a passionate ring which foreboded a storm. He announced at the meeting-house that believers were aware that spirits live and work amongst us, and that many poor souls had to wander about after death ; these were well-known facts, sent as warnings to each generation.

When Kallem heard about this he decided to act on a thought which he had had for some time, namely, to get Aune in his power. He was very unwilling ; having an inventive mind, he generally managed to get out of most scrapes ; he could talk so persuasively that he had before this taken Kallem in ; but now he was not to escape ! His wife agreed to it, so one Sunday morning Kallem hypnotised him, in her presence, down in the office of the hospital—first of all on account of the brandy, but also to clear up this ghost story, which of course no other than this rascal had set afloat ! Thus it happened. Now, there was one great difficulty about it : if it were discovered, Aune would be done for ; his wife thought of this and

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interceded for him. There was nothing left but to forbid his proceedings—and then hold their tongues.

This did not prevent Kallem, on his morning rounds, telling Kent, who did not believe in ghosts more than he himself did, that he had discovered where the tale of Kristen Larssen's ghostly reappearance sprang from; the whole was a prearranged affair. So, when Dr. Kent met Josephine one day visiting one of his patients, and knowing that nothing was so dear to her as hearing news of her brother, he repeated Kallem's words. During dinner little Edward, who held forth everlastingly about these ghost stories, told them that Kristen Larssen had again appeared to two boys; one was a son of Aune, and the other was a son of the lay-preacher! Edward was bursting with excitement. Shortly and decidedly, his mother proved to him that this was nothing but deception; one of the doctors from the town had found out who was at the bottom of this fraud; there was not such a thing as Kristen Larssen's ghost at all.

As soon as the boy had left the dinner-table, the minister reproved Josephine for her tactless conduct.

"How, tactless?"

"Yes, that you could say that to the boy; did you hear how he at once tried to screen himself by saying that I believed in ghosts?" The minister's tone was not arrogant or even reproachful, and she felt that he was right; therefore she did not answer. But it did not rest here, soon after she was in the study.

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"I have been thinking of what you said." He was lying on the sofa, smoking, but got up to make room for her; he was glad she came in. She, however, remained standing. "Is the boy to believe a thing because you say it, even if it be untrue?"

"No; but then you could leave it to me to correct the error."

"Are you quite sure that you would do so?"

"Pray, what do you mean by that?"

"Only that you continually teach him things that you yourself cannot possibly believe."

"What are you driving at?" He got very red; for he felt that this was the beginning of an explanation.

"I have often thought of speaking to you of this," she said, "and now the right moment has come. You surely don't believe that the world was created as it is now in six days, six thousand years ago, and that the story of the first man and woman, and the patriarchs is anything but a tradition? Likewise everything about Paradise. The world and human beings cannot have begun by being perfect. But this is what you teach the children, and of late even Edward."

He now walked up and down the room; she stood in the doorway between the room and the passage. Every time he approached her he gave her a decided, yes, even a look full of power; this was not the look of an evil conscience, she felt that. To show her in what spirit he wished to act, he stopped and said, quietly: "Shan't we sit down, Josephine?"

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"No," answered she, "I did not come to stay."

"What you call a tradition," he said, "is the everlasting truth that God created everything and every one, and that sin is a falling away from Him."

"Why not teach them in this wise, instead of by untrue pictures?"

"Children understand pictures best, Josephine."

"Then tell them that it is only a fairy tale."

"That's of no consequence."

"It is of the greatest consequence that children should not learn everlasting truths in an untrue form—at least, so I think."

He saw that she was working herself up into a state of excitement, and reproved her for it; surely they ought to be able to talk together without that.

"No," she said, "I cannot; for you must know that not only our boy's future, but yours and mine too, depend on this." She went up to the desk to be nearer to him, maybe too she needed support.

But he was not to be put down. "If you yourself, Josephine, were as thoroughly convinced of the eternal truth as you pretend to be, and were you protesting for that truth's sake, then all the rest would be of small importance. And what we wish to put in its stead is very uncertain too; we know that everything did not exactly happen as the revered Book tells us; what we do not know is what the real state of things was. This only we do know, that our life proceeds from God, and in God alone can we be happy;

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therefore, let both children and grown-up people accept the first teachings of our fathers, at any rate for the present." There was all the honest strength of conviction in his words, and they were full of power. She was silent for a long time; but all at once something else came over her.

"Do you know that, if it had not been for the total mismanagement of my intelligence and character when I was a child, I too would have become—different from what I am now?"

"Yes," he said, coldly, "I hear that latterly you have come to this conclusion: that faith is the misfortune of your life."

"I never said that!" she exclaimed, very pale, "never meant it either!" But she added, more quietly: "I have never allowed faith in God and salvation through Jesus to be a restraint on my intelligence. Never!"

"Dear me, how fortunate!" said he, but he sighed deeply afterwards.

"Well, if you don't intend to listen to me," she said, "I will just tell you my business straight out. Either you stop telling the boy those fairy tales which are not innocent ones, since they thus en'snare his understanding, or else, Ole, I can no longer consider you as wholly conscientious."

It was not the first time she had spoken harshly; they had had many a long and bitter quarrel. But she had never spoken quite so harshly, never before attacked his faith in that way. She had pleaded her right to have her own

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opinions, but always with much abuse of his ; she had parried his attacks with sharp weapons ; but never before had she talked like that or laid down conditions. For long he had been weighed down by the knowledge that she was brooding over something ; but this fully armed purpose, sustained by such strength of mind and so much anger—there they stood facing each other ; each sounding the depths of the other's will. He too was boiling over with indignant rage, and to put an end at once to anything she might imagine, he said : " The boy remains with me ! "

" With you ? " she turned ashy pale. " Have you more right to him than I ? Are you his mother ? "

" I am his father. The Bible and the law constitute the father owner of the child. "

She began to walk up and down, but only between the window and door, as though they were the bars of a cage ; her bosom heaved, her breathing was audible, the paleness of her face, her voice, her eyes, all told of the dreadful agitation she was in ; she would never have thought him capable of such a thing.

" Are you not ashamed of yourself ? Would you keep the boy ? "

" Such is my intention, as sure as God orders me to do it. You shall not corrupt our boy ! "

" Corrupt him ? I ? No, that is too much, now I will speak out ! From my childhood up you gained power over me in that very same way. Through your unwavering faith you gained power over my mind without my knowing it, for

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you were so good and devoted. In that way you ruined my nature—that you did—it was meant for other things. You gave me an aim, a choice in life, I knew nothing of it myself. I tell you all this as it was, without blaming you for it. But you must know that you shall not have the same power over my child. Not as long as there is a spark of life in me, in spite of both law and Bible. Now you know that, and you shall see it too!”

Had she but known that for long, very long, he had expected that she would confront him in this way, she would have spared herself such a terrible outburst of passion. He himself was thoroughly master of his feelings.

“Of course, I have led astray your most divine nature, I have known it long! I have done it through that faith which you do not possess. My dear, I was aware of that before you went away!” He spoke slowly and impressively.

“Oh, so you do know it!” she burst forth, passionately; “you do know it! Your faith has never been mine; it did not suit me. But I have had none other instead; I went about thinking it was a sin that I could not have the same faith as you; I was crushed and overwhelmed, not being able to devote all my strength to something of my own. Therefore I have never been like others. It has all been wrong!”

“What would you have been, you?”

“Let me say the worst—a circus rider,” answered she, without as much as turning an eye. He stopped abruptly, he could neither believe his ears nor his eyes.

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"Circus rider?" He laughed scornfully. "Indeed, it has been a great loss for the world—and for yourself, Josephine, that you did not become one!"

"I knew you would think so! But if I had had to do with the management of a circus I could have provided bread for hundreds, and healthy amusement for thousands. That is not so little—it is more than most can do. As it is, what have I done? What empty trifles have I been struggling with? And to what have I attained? That I am on the point of despising both yourself and me! What has our life—what has our intercourse come to? Can you even say that you cherish any love for me? Can I say that I am fond of you?"

"No, Josephine, we both know of whom *you* are fond."

Had he struck her as her brother had done, she could not have been more furious—partly because he had said that (she scarcely knew that it had been in his thoughts), and partly because this man who made that speech owed everything to her brother and to herself, and yet it was he who had come between the brother and sister and separated them.

"Ah, he possesses that which you have not!" she answered, seeking to wound him. "Nevertheless, it is cowardly of you to say such a thing."

"Is it, indeed? Do you not think that I know it is his fault that I have lost you, lost the peace of my home, lost, too, all joy in my calling,

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and am now threatened with the loss of my child?"

His voice trembled, he began in anger, but it turned to deep grief, and it was the same with her. She felt inclined to sob and cry. But neither of them would give way to such weakness. She stood looking out of the window; he walked up and down the room. There was a long, long pause. Again she was overcome with anger. His step, too, sounded defiant; still there was silence. What he had just said was shameful, certainly.

"Well," she said, without looking round, "now you know the conditions. You can preach about such tales as that of Kristen Larssen's haunting the place, and you have not even sought to inquire into the matter! Just as with your tales of Paradise; you don't believe in them yourself, and yet you can repeat them! Can I have any respect for such conduct? I must say, my brother is much more honest than that! If you come again to my boy with those tales without telling him that they are only fairy tales," and she turned around to him, "then, Ole, there will be an end to our living together. Before God, this is the truth. It will never be any use your trying to take him from me by such means." She moved toward him: "I will never submit to it, Ole!" She left him.

On that very Sunday, at the self-same hour, Kallem returned home to dine; his dinner hour was somewhat later than his brother-in-law's.

He could see Ragni through the kitchen door

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with a long apron on which reached up to her chin ; she was cutting up vegetables on the kitchen table. He took his things off in the passage and went in and joined her ; latterly he had an ever-increasing fear, which he had to conceal. Was it the white apron that threw a pale shadow over her, or the steam from Sigrid's cooking ? She really was looking fearfully ill. And surely she had been crying. It sent a pang through his heart. She did not look up from her work, but said :

" We are to have a guest for dinner."

" We are ? "

" Yes, Otto Meek, Karl's father ; he was here this morning, and is now coming to dinner."

" How is Karl getting on ? "

" Not well. Oh, here comes Meek ! "

His big head under a fur cap could be seen appearing over the prosperous-looking top-coat ; he was at the other side of the hedge ; now he turned in and Kallem went to meet him. During the time that Meek practised he had turned his attention particularly to diseases of the chest, which were but too prevalent in these parts of the country, and he took the most lively interest in Kallem's writings and in his work at the hospital ; Kallem was glad when he came. As he helped him off with his coat he said that Ragni had told him Karl was not well.

" No, he is not."

• " What is the matter with him ? "

" Well, that is the reason of my coming here," answered Meek.

" You have spoken to my wife ? "

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"Yes." They both went in. The room was warm and cosy, the piano stood open. Had she been playing when Meek knocked at the door? If that were the case, then she could not be as ill as she looked; he longed to examine her chest.

Meek was more silent and gloomy than ever that day.

"Well," said Kallem, "did you and my wife come to an agreement about Karl?"

Meek looked up at him rather surprised. "Do you mean about writing to him?"

"Yes. You know there has been one or other knotty point, as was often the case."

"Yes," answered Meek, and remained sitting there quite silent.

"Do you imagine I know anything of it? Not I, not a scrap."

Meek appeared to be more and more perplexed. "I said to your wife she ought to tell you. It is very good of her not to do so. But the case is serious." His melancholy eyes looked into Kallem's.

"Serious, do you call it?"

"Yes, I shall be obliged to take him home."

Kallem jumped up from his seat. Meek continued:

"It is altogether useless, his being there."

"But what is wrong? Would you like us to try with him again?" Kallem thought there was a possibility of the youth's having relapsed into his old ways. Meek looked inquiringly at him, almost frightened.

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"How do you think your wife really is?" he asked.

Kallem turned red; it struck him like a shot in the midst of his own secret fears. "She caught a nasty cold which she cannot get rid of; for a while I thought. . . . I'll tell you what! Can't you sound her chest?" His own doubts had become certainty, his heart beat so that he would not have been capable of examining her himself. Meek continued to gaze at him and Kallem grew more frightened. "Won't you examine her?"

"Yes, of course. Has it not been done recently?"

"Not very recently. No. I don't wish to alarm her. Because if her imagination begins to work then there is danger for her. Besides, there was something else. . . . However, now I will——" he would have gone to fetch her.

"Did you know her father?" asked Meek.

Kallem shuddered.

"Did you?"

"Yes, I was doctor to the fisheries up there."

"Was he——?" Kallem asked breathlessly and unable to finish his sentence. Meek merely nodded. Kallem clasped his head with both hands, hurried to the door, came back again: "You will examine her now, here, at once?"

Kallem led her in tenderly, without giving her time to take off her apron, and carefully brought her up close to the windows. Evidently she had been crying—and those rings under her eyes, her thinness, her colour! She saw his alarm but

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mistook the cause. Out in the kitchen she had been thinking ; now they must be talking about Karl ; now Kallem will hear why it is I get no more letters from him. And now that she saw Kallem's agitation she thought, can he be angry because I did not tell him ? She could not bear the idea of that, it made her hot and cold by turns.

" Ragni, darling, Dr. Meek would like to sound your chest."

Was that what it was ! She was much alarmed, she looked at him with imploring eyes like a stricken deer, begging to be spared. But again he entreated her, and began carefully taking off her big apron ; submissive as she was she gave herself up to them.

Kallem guessed at once, by the other's manner, by his stopping and then listening again that something terrible was coming. Her startled eyes sought her husband's, and increased his suffering—did she suspect anything herself ? Or was she reproaching him for letting any one but him do this ?

Now the doctor's great head was pressed to her back. At the right side, what was it ? . . . a thickening of the tip of the lung ? or the tissues ? He imagined the worst, and she did the same ; he could see that. Could it be that she knew more than she would acknowledge ? Concealed something just as he concealed his fears ? . . . Good God, such sorrowfully beseeching eyes were never seen, save only when the fear of death was in them. He was seized with it himself.

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"Have you been coughing more than usual lately?" She seemed uncertain as to what she should answer, and looked imploringly at Kallem. Her hands were trembling, and she tried to hide it; Meek noticed it! "Do you get very tired when you are out walking?" he asked. Again she looked at Kallem in despair, as though she ought to beg his pardon for it. "Do you become breathless quickly?" continued the other.

"Yes."

"Do you at times feel excessively weak, almost as though you were going to faint?" She now looked at Kallem in the greatest alarm. "Maybe you have fainted?"

"Yes."

"Have you?" exclaimed Kallem.

"Yes, to-day I did," she said hurriedly, trembling all over.

"Was that after I had spoken to you?"

"Yes, for I wanted a little fresh air, and then——" here her tears choked her utterance.

Dr. Meek smiled a little. "When you cough, I presume it hurts you here?" he pointed to the right collar-bone. She nodded.

"Have you ever looked at what comes up when you cough?" She made no answer. "Have you never done that?"

"Yes, I have; yesterday evening."

"And how was it?" She was silent, staring at the floor. "Was there blood mixed with it?" She nodded; her tears were falling fast, she did not dare to look up.

Kallem was speechless. Meek asked no more

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questions. Ragni rearranged her dress, and Meek silently handed her a shawl she had taken off while he was examining her. And as she sat helplessly trying to put it on again, Kallem suddenly seemed to think of something he had to fetch from the office. He did not return. She understood the reason why, and for a little while she was doubtful whether she could get up from her chair, and felt as if she would faint again ; but the thought of him alone in the office helped her to overcome her weakness, she must go to him. So she begged Dr. Meek to excuse her, got up and went toward the dining-room door and disappeared through it. She too remained away.

Meek waited first a few moments, then a little longer—and still longer. Then he went out to the passage, put on his coat and hat, told the servant in the kitchen that he was obliged to leave ; and left many messages for them.

Sigrid looked for them in the rooms, knocked at the door of the office, could get no answer ; she listened and at last opened the door. Kallem was lying on the sofa, Ragni kneeling beside him close up to him. Sigrid announced very quietly that the dinner was ready, and that Dr. Meek had gone away. No one answered, no one looked up.

Hitherto Kallem and Ragni had always considered that the day when Ragni sailed for America was the worst they had ever gone through ; both in their letters and in speaking of it they had said that they felt as though he

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must die. But death is different ; it is not like anything else. They learned to know that now.

After that day there came a time full of hopeless struggles, speechless despair, and tenderest but joyless love. Ragni had various matters "to arrange," which she quietly set about doing ; she had a good deal too to write, and whenever she was able she was thus occupied. She wrote, then scratched out ; the whole thing, notwithstanding all her work, proved to be a very short affair. But as long as she was taken up with what she had set herself to get done, she really seemed tolerably well ; Kallem was quite surprised.

He himself had lost all courage. He saw the worst before him. As long as he could he shrank from examining her expectoration ; . . . he knew beforehand that he would find tubercular bacilli there—that enemy, to fight against which he had spent both fortune and life. And now it had conquered him in his own house. But one day he was obliged to do it—and with the expected result. He did not pace up and down the laboratory, neither did he weep nor wring his hands. He only tried whether it were possible to think without her ; but it ended always by his thinking of her only. From the hour they first met—all her little ways, the most trifling proofs of her charm and talents, her failings and her silent poetical love, he lived all over again in equal joy and grief ; it was all just as dear to him, and just as impossible to part with ; countless incidents full of humour, warmth, fear, sense of beauty, devotion ; they all followed him about like so

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many eyes. Where could he go to, what more could he possibly find to do? She was with him in all his work. Her portrait, taken in the third year of her stay in America, was standing on the edge of the stove; it had been sent to him originally that he might see what effect the progress of her intellectual development had produced in her face and eyes, a joyful confirmation of all he had predicted when he sent her over there. Now, as always, the eyes of the portrait seemed to seek his; during that time of waiting, their smile had cheered and encouraged him; what had it not been for him—that portrait? And now there came pouring in on him all the recollections of their first meeting, the first words, first shy strangeness, the first full and entire recognition, the first embrace.

Only to remind him that now all must cease. All, too, that he had thought of and done in his life together with her; the delight in it, his capabilities, his faith. What in all the world had happened? He was bound to speak to her about it; was there anything she wished to hide from him? Some imprudence which she dare not confess? What could it be? But he must be very careful about it.

Then one day when he came home she was not downstairs. He went up to her and found her lying down. She stretched out her hand—how thin it had become! and fastened her large eyes on him with a faint, half-veiled expression: "I lay down for a little," she whispered; "only for an hour or two." She did not look so very ill;

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perhaps because she was in bed. He sat down beside the bed and took both her long thin hands between his.

"There is something in all this," he ventured to say, "which has not been confided to me. Once I was entirely on a wrong scent, but, latterly too, it has been more hurried than I could understand, for this reason, that I have not been watchful enough. There is something at the bottom of all this, some great, may be oft-repeated imprudence which I have not been counting on. Darling, tell it me now; I shall have no peace until you do."

"I will tell you. I have just been thinking about it now. Downstairs in my writing-table you will find some papers in the first drawer to the left; they are all for you. You must read them when—" she broke off abruptly. "By and by," she added and pressed his hand gently.

"Then I am not to hear about it now?"

"Yes, what are you asking about? Oh, yes. I only had not got so far." She asked him to help her change her position; he did so. "Yes, you shall hear it now. It is for your sake I kept it secret," her eyes filled—"my own"—again a gentle pressure of the hand and a smile. He dried her tears with his handkerchief, letting it slip in under his own spectacles as well. She lay gazing at him, but did not speak; had she forgotten or had she changed her mind? He bent down over her:

"Well—?" he asked, "you will not tell me?"

"Oh, yes, the top paper in the drawer, in

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Karl's handwriting ; you may read that at once. But not the others."

"Does Karl's letter contain it ?"

She nodded slightly, it was barely visible then she closed her eyes.

"The key ?" he whispered.

"It is in the drawer," she answered, without opening her eyes and let his hand go.

He went downstairs, opened the drawer, and took out the letter we know of, and sat down to read it properly.

His horror ! And his indignation—and his helplessness ! Why had he not known of this in time ? He paced up and down the room, raging, he sat down again like one paralysed ; he made plans and rejected them ; he would have gone to every soul in the place and told them they lied. He would force his way into the meeting-house one fine day when it was crowded, climb to the pulpit and accuse them of the most cowardly, treacherous murder . . . then he suddenly remembered that even if Ragni had been perfectly well, that would have been enough to kill her.

He himself lived only to do the best he could for all people ; and amongst them all there was not one honest or grateful enough, or even indignant enough to tell him that he ought to defend his own and his wife's good name and the honour of his marriage ! What apathy and indifference ! What free and open scope for malice and for unjust judging of others in this "Christian" community ! Now he understood his sister

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—she had believed this slander? It was especially to talk to him about this that she had waited for him that evening when he—! And in her indignation at this, which she so fully and firmly believed to be true (for what will not people believe about a freethinker) she continued to bring “the whale” right down upon them! Every one believed it, every one condemned her without hesitation. No one stood up for her, not a soul came to the rescue.

This was what Ragni had had to suffer for being so kind to Karl! It had been all the more unselfish of her because at first it had cost her a struggle, and indeed later on it had often been an effort, too; it was only now that he knew it. In all his life he had never met with any one as good as she was. To think that her tender-hearted disposition should thus be . . . ! The wretches, the false guardians of salvation, psalm-singing egotists, heartless prayer-makers! He read Karl's letter over again; he felt so heartily sorry for him. Poor, poor fellow. His love for her was quite a natural thing; what good honest man would not adore any one who had been wronged so unjustly for his sake? The lad's gratitude and admiration would necessarily turn to love. As soon as Karl came home, he would have him over—that he would! And he should stay, too, till she drew her last breath! And he, and none other, would Kallem have to walk with him. . . . On that terrible day after her coffin! He flung himself on the sofa and cried aloud.

Perchance he had been too much taken up with

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his own work ; he ought to have associated more with people, and taken her more about with him ; then this would never have happened. None who had really felt a lasting impression of her goodness and pure soul would have dared . . . though indeed who can tell ? Such creatures of habit, blinded by their dogmas, cannot see.

In came Sigrid running, her mistress was very ill, had a terrible fit of coughing. He crossed the rooms, the passage, and was up the stairs in nine or ten bounds ; the attack was over when he got there ; but she lay bathed in perspiration, so weak and exhausted that she was on the point of fainting. What she had brought up in coughing was of a greenish colour and streaked with blood—well did he know the look of it. He accounted for this, thinking that he had stayed away too long, her excitement had increased, she had grown too warm, had probably thrown off the clothes and then . . . She lay there with eyes closed and he tried what he could to make her sleep. After that she never left her room again.

From her he went straight down to his writing-table and despatched a letter to Dr. Meek, telling him what had happened, and without entering into further details, he wrote: "If Karl has come, I suppose we shall soon see him here? Now I know everything!"

He went out to fetch a woman to sit up at night, but went up to her again the moment he got back ; she seemed to be easier and was asleep, and when at last she did awake, her eyes fell first on him. He waited on her, giving her

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something to drink, and all the questions he so plainly read in her eyes, he answered by kissing her poor thin hand, for his lips quivered and his glasses were bedewed with tears.

But they talked about other things—how that her sister would not be able to come, and that he had himself been to fetch Sissel Aune to help to nurse Ragni; she was the best person he knew of for that sort of thing, and then she was truly devoted to them. Ragni nodded her consent. They never wearied of gazing at each other, as those do who cannot be satisfied. And they both thought of that which they now both knew—the cause of her lying there ill. “Poor Karl!” whispered she.

He answered: “Poor Karl!”

He felt obliged to get up, pretended he had forgotten something down-stairs; he could always make an excuse.

Had he but been able to talk to her! But he dared not, and he could not find time to be alone. He attended to all his hospital work, and received those of his patients who came to him; but he gave up everything else so as to sit with her!

How terrible it seemed to him that he should have given both his work and his fortune to these people, and they repaid him by murdering his life's joy! What kind of measure did people mete with, if they could not understand merely by looking at her, that she was the purest, the most refined little person amongst them all—to him it was inexplicable; their blindness seemed so revolting. All those he knew were, for the

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most part, plain middle-class people, comfortable and fond of their homes in daily life, none of them particularly bright, of course ; they were all church-going people, a few attended the meeting-house too, Pastor Tuft's body-guard. Among the latter he had come across several good, prudent sort of people. And yet so pitiless in their judgment, so cruelly loving—all of them murderers without stain or blemish.

And there was none he could go to and take by the throat, exclaim : " You have done this ; you are answerable to me for this ! " Meek and lovable accomplices ! There was one who stood apart from the others—Josephine. Josephine had not invented this ; that was not her way. But she would believe what was invented when it concerned any one she disliked. With icy-cold silence she would allow other people to keep their false, wicked belief in the slander, or she would let it go on increasing. How indignant he felt in his heart toward her ! Although she was certainly not the originator of the report—he had to repeat that constantly, she would hardly sully her lips with such slander, she was too grand for that—still Josephine was the most to blame for this murder ! He was convinced that however little of a Christian she was in herself, her love of Christian dogmas had been offended by the little creature's want of faith, and by such a very faulty person daring to come and reject their faith. Thence her excessive " spirit of justice " which killed with so sure and well-meaning a blow.

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But there was this much likeness between them, that he, too, was filled with the greatest desire of vengeance. He, too, called it "justice" and he had no idea that he was lying. When he was with Ragni he never had those feelings; her mere presence always did him good. He became deeply agitated if he did feel like that when with her, would well-nigh crush her hand, stroke her forehead and gazing into her eyes, watch her and wait on her till he felt he must go; otherwise he would have knelt down beside her and given way completely.

Good, helpful Sissel Aune was sitting there now, her dark eyes watching over her with prudent calmness, or turning sometimes, full of sympathy, to him. She represented all those whom he had helped and who would have helped him had they been allowed. Aase or Sören Pedersen came creeping to the kitchen every morning to hear how she was, and as the news spread, there came others, all quietly sympathetic. Poor Sigrid could not go up much to her mistress on account of her crying. But would go all the same when such things as this happened—for instance when Fru Baier the colonel's wife brought a lovely flower in a pot which she had cherished and nurtured through the winter, and which she carried under her cloak to protect from the severe cold; it was to be taken up to Fru Kallem and put where she could see it. A servant girl, whose child Kallem had attended in a severe illness (the same girl who had seen Kristen Larssen's ghost) had also a flower in a pot, a single one, and

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when she heard of Fru Baier's gift she brought hers, too. The pot it was in was very common, but what did that matter? Without such tokens of sympathy Kallem could never have borne up.

One day when he had been over to the hospital where there was something going on he came back home so deep in thought that he did not notice there were strange travelling wraps hanging in the passage. He opened the door into the room before taking off his own things; and there close by the windows next the veranda stood Otto and Karl Meek. Karl was the first to turn round; and he came and threw himself in Kallem's arms. He looked ill, and his manner was restless and confused. His long hair was in disorder, his oval face, large in itself, seemed to have grown larger; his eyes had a burning, languishing look in them, the like of which Kallem had never seen. They never left his own eyes. They besought his indulgence; they told a tale of bitter sorrow, and followed him about wherever he went. Karl could not control his feelings, and, as Kallem was obliged to talk to his father, Karl began looking about him, went up to the piano, stroked the tables with his hands, fingered the flowers and turned over the music—then went out to the dining-room, into the office, stayed there a little by himself, and from there out to the kitchen to Sigrid, and there he stayed. Kallem looked round after him repeatedly; Dr. Meek noticed it, and said:

"All we Meeks have strong feelings. We have

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tried to tame them ; but Karl cannot control his ; they are only pent in to burst forth with greater violence."

When Karl came back, he had been crying bitterly ; Kalle did not wish him to go up to Ragni ; at all events he must wait until he was calmer. Karl himself said he would be calm the moment he went up to her ; he implored to be allowed to see her ; but to no avail. He did not see her the whole of that day, and, as the evening was always her worst time, she was never even told that he was there.

The next morning, when she had been tidied for the day, Kalle let her know that Dr. Otto Meek had come to town, and had called yesterday to ask after her.

"And Karl too ?" she asked.

"Yes, Karl was with him." She lay quiet for a little without saying anything.

"I ought to be able to hear if any one were to play downstairs."

"Yes, if we open the room door ; but would it be wise ?" The passage was warm and shut in by doors, the upstairs rooms were always aired by means of it ; so in that respect there was nothing to be afraid of. "But you think you can bear the music ?"

"Yes, I long for music," she answered.

Sissel Aune looked at the doctor ; she evidently thought it was not wise. "May Karl not come up to see you ?"

Ragni lay folding the corner of the sheet with the one hand, in the other she held her handker-

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chief: she did not answer; clearly she had no wish to see him.

"But you will see Dr. Meek?"

"Must I?"

Kallem wished him to see her. Dr. Meek came later in the day and Kallem told him all. Karl begged most humbly to be allowed to stand in the doorway behind the others. He promised not to say a word, or make a movement, and to go away directly. Kallem felt so sorry for him that he could not deny his request. He went in first and announced Dr. Meek, who then followed him in. Dr. Meek's broad back quite hid Karl, who placed himself in the door. Ragni lay with her face turned from the light, therefore toward the door. She did not see Karl, but he caught a glimpse of her thin, hollow-cheeked face, of her feverish cheeks and dry lips; her eyes in their glistening brightness, seemed pleading for help. The consuming thirst that tortured her day and night made Sissel come forward from the other side and stand half in front of her, propping her up as she gave her something to drink.

Meek asked her a few questions, but she answered him absently and glanced fearfully and timidly from side to side; did she guess that Karl was there? Afterwards she moved a little and Sissel slipped back to her place; then she might have seen Karl, but he was gone.

Later on they found him sitting crouching in the downstairs room, in the greatest despair, but he asked if he might stay there and have his former room again;—even if he were not allowed

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to see her again, he could not keep away. Kallem did not dare to refuse him; and his father, too, seemed 'o wish it. There was something about him that made them both feel anxious.

The next morning Karl played the piano for her; the door downstairs was open and her door was ajar; the music sounded muffled, but very sweet. He had improved much in his playing; she did not know the piece he played, but it pleased her; she sent a greeting down to him, and that she was very grateful to him for it. By-and-by he played something else, and the following morning he did the same. The result was that she sent for him to come up to her. Karl promised to be quiet, oh so very quiet, and only to stay there a moment. In the passage he already began to walk on tip-toe and glided in, mastering his emotion. But as soon as he was under the influence of her eyes, as in olden days, he could feel that she was afraid of him and would rather he went away. This grieved him much; he stood there, the embodiment of an earnest entreaty to be allowed to stay. She, too, perceived the change in him; Kallem took her hand and she grew calmer. The longer he stood there, the more she felt pity for him. He had suffered, he was a good lad; she tried to smile at him, even stretched out her poor wasted hand. Karl looked at Kallem, but did not take her hand, nor did he advance a single step; but his agitation increased, and, as though she would quiet it, she whispered: "Good Karl!" He went away.

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He was very quiet and silent after this visit, just as though he were brooding over some plan or purpose. He talked still less to Kallem, and not at all to any one else. Every morning he was allowed to be upstairs for a little while; he played for her downstairs, but otherwise went about alone the whole day.

As he was playing one morning, she could tell by the first few chords that it was something of his own. Once or twice before she had heard some scraps of his own composition; now he had adopted a different method, but the originality of his talent suffered by it. This new piece was a beginning to something greater, a wild introduction full of stormy passions! Heavens! thought she, it must be meant for himself. After the crashing storm there came a calm, and a melody arose, simple and touching; can that be meant for me? Then there came shrieks and yells breaking in upon this peaceful little melody; a few bars of melody and several bars of lamentation and crying, the first air rushing and mingling with the other, all done in a natural sort of way—almost too natural, for it became irresistibly comical. She had to be careful not to laugh, for she could not stand that sort of thing. She looked at Sissel Aune to ask her to hurry down and put an end to it; but Sissel Aune's clever face expressed so much astonishment on hearing these most natural shrieks. Dear, dear, can people scream like that in music too? The last hidden remains of Ragni's old merry humour broke out in a few peals of laughter, a few more,

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and then the cough ! Again the cough, and again and again, a worse fit than she had ever had before.

Through his playing, Karl heard the bell rung down to the kitchen ; he heard Sigrid rush upstairs and come tearing down again calling for the doctor. Karl knew that he had just gone across to the hospital, and ran off himself, without hat or coat ; he could not find him at once, so they did not get back before the fit was over. There was a greater quantity of blood than usual. Kallem was much alarmed, Karl could see, for he had gone upstairs after him almost unconsciously. He retired, though, immediately.

Later in the morning her room was aired, but Kallem stayed there all the time ; Karl passed by outside, and heard him talking, so he ventured to peep in. Ragni lay there much exhausted, but Kallem had just asked her if she did not feel any better ? She caught a glimpse of Karl, with his great, big, frightened face. She recollected how she had laughed at him, and she had heard from Kallem that in his fright he had run to fetch him without either coat or hat. She made a sign to Kallem that Karl was to come in. She smiled at him, even raised her hand a little, just a very little ; was it to thank him ? He ventured to draw nearer, he would take her hand to-day. He would do more, he would bend down over it ; there came a look into his eyes. Kallem, who was standing at her right, saw it ; saw, too, that it was the hand she was holding the handkerchief in that he would have bent over and perhaps kissed ; he hastened to say :

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"Do not do that, Karl."

Karl drew himself up again and looked at them both ; but again there came that strange look in his eyes, and in an instant he seized both hand and handkerchief and kissed them both. Before anything could be said, he stood upright again as though he would challenge them all, or had done some mighty deed of valour. Ragni lay there with eyes devoid of hope or understanding ; she could not take in his warlike attitude, his high-flown purpose, but only felt the more convinced of his terrible instability. Karl had vanished.

If his wish were to die with her, it was a mistaken calculation, which, under other circumstances, would have been amusing, since she had just been tidied and arranged after her attack and had had a fresh handkerchief given her. But Kallem thought only that what is ordered for the best only makes mad folk still madder—she had been much startled.

As soon as he could, he went in search of Karl. He found him with his overcoat on, hurrying out. But Kallem called out :

"Where are you going to ?"

Karl did not answer ; he was excited and only thought of getting away. Kallem drew him into the room, placed himself in front of him and looked steadily at him, then put his arm round his neck. Upon this, Karl burst into tears. He complained that he was altogether impossible ; nobody ever wanted him and he was fit for nothing. For long Kallem could not get in a word ; the other would not let himself be comforted ;

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his misery and worthlessness were too great, and he was utterly without talent. He had that morning been playing his latest composition, originated like none other, out of his own life; the most true that he could produce, and it had seemed to him to be comical, terribly comical! Ah ha! thought Kallem, is it that; that is the matter?

And it was that. He could feel in her presence how she judged him!

Kallem saw his mistake in having let him come to them at all; he thought with horror of all Ragni must formerly have gone through with him. He had considerable difficulty himself in keeping him in order just now.

One day he said to her—she had just been asking after Karl—"You evidently have had more trouble with him than I had the slightest idea of." She closed her eyes, then opened them again smiling.

Karl did not come to see her any more, did not even ask to be allowed to do so. He could not play during all this self-torture; Kallem had almost to threaten him before he could succeed in hearing any of his own little pieces. At last he agreed, but with closed doors; Ragni, however, heard them and thought them very pretty; so did Kallem. Karl became quite happy again at this; some of his self-assurance returned, and by degrees he became more agreeable.

When once Kallem had got everything quiet and in order, his turn came. He fought manfully, but not always with success, and Karl felt there

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were others besides himself who suffered, and others to be thought of too. A total change came over him. He now only lived for Kallem, full of care and thought for him. There was one mode of comforting him that never failed ; this he often had recourse to. It was to speak of Ragni and give an impressive description of her. He could paint beautiful pictures of all the peculiarities of her nature and person ; could artistically depict some action or word of hers with such adoring fervour, that it was balm to Kallem's feelings ; he stood in need of the warming rays of sympathy, for he was sinking with despair at her increasing weakness. She could not even keep her head on the pillow ; it fell either to one side or the other, her eyes had an ethereal look, that seemed to spiritualise everything she gazed at ; her thin, silent lips were half open on account of the difficulty in her breathing ; as she lay there in that white room, between the white sheets and in that whitegown, she was like some gasping fledgling in a deserted, downy nest. Often when Kallem left the room, unable to restrain his grief, or from over-fatigue, it was Karl who persuaded him to rest, or found the right word to comfort, or sing endless praises of her.

She could not talk much, indeed she felt no inclination to do so ; but, when she did speak, she showed that she did not for a moment mis take her state—as consumptive people generally do. One day she made a sign to Kallem to bend down closer to her. "Kristen Larssen," she whispered, "there in that corner." She smiled

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and added: "I am not afraid of him any more now." Another time she sent for Kallem only to say, "You must not feel anger toward any one—for my sake." She mentioned no name. Kallem pressed her hand; her eyes flashed on him in rapturous joy. Sometimes she tried to smile, a thing no longer in her power. If she remarked his tears, she would beckon to him, and put her fingers through his hair. Once while so doing he thanked her for everything, from their first meeting till this moment—she tried to pull his hair; he was not to say those kind of things.

Since then they scarcely spoke. They used the language of the eyes, with pressure of the hands. They were one in their grief, and had no thought left unuttered. The gratitude they felt toward each other, the horror of an approaching separation, could not be expressed in words. The hour was at hand.

One evening they heard Sissel ring, and ring, and ring. Sigrid rushed up, after her Kallem and Karl; the latter remained outside! He could hear that it was a fit of coughing, a terrible one again. He could not conceive that she still had so much strength; each separate cough seemed to stab his breast; it cut right through him and crushed him; the cold sweat broke out on him when he heard her groans of pain; he could not bear to listen, yet he dared not go away. Probably this was her last hour. He heard how Sigrid was weeping, and heard her say: "Oh mistress! mistress!"—and soon after: "She is

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dying!" He opened the door. The first thing he saw was blood, and he sank to the ground fainting.

When he came to himself, he was lying on his bed; Sigrid was sitting beside him crying. This was the first thing he remarked; then suddenly he remembered everything and asked: "Is she dead?"

"The doctor thinks it will soon be over."

Later on they were both allowed to go in. There she lay in her bed as if asleep, white as the sheets she lay on. Kallem was holding her hand; as they entered they could not see his face, only the heaving of his shoulders, and hear his groans. Sissel stood at the other side. How wonderful it was to see the different degrees of grief. Although her strong, open features were full of sympathy, still they belonged to an outsider; she seemed removed miles from Kallem's silent despair.

"Is she dead?" whispered Sigrid. Sissel shook her head. And Ragni heard the question; she looked up. She exerted her last strength to please them; she tried—one can't say to smile, for that was beyond her power now; no, she wished to send them some last message. It lighted on Sigrid and Karl; but she at once transferred it to Kallem. A moment after she was dead.

The others left the room; Kallem still sat on. When he went down, he found no one. Karl had gone to his room, Sissel and Sigrid were sitting together in the latter's room. The kitchen was empty; rooms empty, office empty. He had

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promised to read something she had written, yes, there it lay under Karl's letter, and on it was written: "By and by." But he could not read it now, scarcely, indeed, as long as she still lay in the house. He went up to her book-shelf and gazed at it—the image of her own self. How often had he done this before and smiled at the titles of the books. His eyes now fell on "Vildanden" by Henrik Ibsen. He was so tall, that, looking at it from above, it seemed to him there was a gap between the last leaves, so he took out the book. Just fancy, she had cut out the leaves where Hedvig's sad story is about to close, where she shoots herself, and all that follows after that. Cut it right out; it ought never to have happened.

Nothing could have affected him more. He threw himself down on the sofa, and his sobs were like those of an ill-used child. Of course she was too refined and too timid; the world we have to battle in is still too rough; it must improve before such as she can live in it. She tried to take from it all she did not like; but it was she who was taken.

XI

SOME days before the Sunday on which the struggle between Ole and Josephine about little Edward's education had taken place, he had had a cough. That evening he was not quite well, so was kept indoors.

In a few days he was out again and seemed very bright; but one evening he was feverish and cross, with a dry cough, and so was kept in on the following days. Accustomed as he was to be in the open air, he grew fretful and lost his appetite; Josephine had many a fight with him and at last had to be severe. Then he began whimpering and wanted to go to his grandmother; that was not allowed. But when his grandmother came to see him, he was cross and peevish and went off to his father. But he came back again crying; he had not been allowed to pull out the books from the lower shelves to build a house with.

So he was put to bed feverish and cross; complained that when he coughed it hurt him again in the right side of his chest; during the night he was in a high fever, raving about Kristen Larssen; that he was chasing all the boys and was going to carry them off to hell in a big bag.

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Josephine doctored him with compresses of turpentine, &c.; but in the morning, when his father came up to see him, she begged that the doctor might be sent for.

Kent was their family doctor; he was not able to come before the evening, and found that the boy had pleurisy in the right side. All that Josephine had done was quite correct; he himself gave some orders respecting the necessary diet, and prescribed a mixture to be taken every other hour, also that if the fever increased so that his temperature rose higher than 39 degrees Centigrade, he was to be sent for.

The next few days the boy seemed better, had a little appetite, coughed less; his temperature in the evening was never higher than 38 degrees. God be praised!

Though the danger had only been very slight, both Tuft and Josephine felt it like a gentle pressure on the shoulder by an invisible hand! In this way they were forced to draw nearer to each other, and they sought opportunities of talking together—certainly it was only about the child's state; but something both in voice and manner seemed pleading for pardon.

His cough and the pain in the side decreased, and by degrees the boy grew visibly better; but his appetite was not good; he still had a little fever every day, and he did not gain strength. They bought him some new toys which he was delighted with the first day; but the next day he was tired of them; he listened to the fairy tales which his father and mother told him by turns, without

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asking a single question ; he took no notice of his grandmother's visits. Sometimes he would grow quite hot, and directly after felt quite cold. Kent was specially anxious because the child's temperature rose every evening ; he began to give him quinine, then tried a blister ; Josephine would not leave his bedside and could not bear to hear of any one taking her place ; neither did the child like any one else to come near him.

However there was an improvement, and the minister said one evening, when they were sitting together after having tried the child's temperature : " We shall escape with a good fright, Josephine." She looked up at him ; he put out his hand ; she placed hers in it, but seemed half ashamed and took it away again.

Dr. Kent had told them that Fru Kallem was very ill ; she could no longer leave her bedroom. Later on they heard from others that she suffered from decline ; they each separately asked Dr. Kent, who told them that it was galloping consumption.

The minister did not mention it to Josephine ; but he said to Kent that this would doubtless be a blessing for his brother-in-law ; possibly he would now be less burdened and able to work his way higher up.

Josephine took it in quite a different way ; he could see it by her increased reserve ; only very rarely would she say a word or two to him.

Some time afterwards, as she was lying on her bed one afternoon and wondering how it would affect her brother if Ragni were to die—suddenly

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she saw him. At first she thought nothing of it ; but it grew so excessively distinct. She saw him stretched at full length on a sofa in his office ; she could see the whole room, curtains, bookshelves, books, desk, two tables, a large armchair, several half-opened books, and sheets of paper covered with writing lying side by side. . . . She saw each sheet, each little detail, and he himself in a brown suit of clothes which she did not know. But she had never been in the office since it was furnished, and had never seen that furniture, nor the curtains and carpet ; but she had no doubt whatever that it was exactly as she saw it. At any other time this would have produced a strange impression ; but now it was all swallowed up in the fact of her seeing him ; for he was so worn and wasted by grief ! The closer she looked at him, the worse it became. In such despair did he seem to be, that never before in her life, not even when their father died, had anything so moved her. She saw him tossing about sobbing bitterly ; she saw him holding his hands clasped before him. At last she saw nothing but him, the agony of his eyes from under the busy brows and spectacles, and all around him a great waste.

She awoke bathed in cold perspiration and so exhausted that she could hardly lift a finger. From that time she seemed weighed down by a vague fear : it deprived her of sleep. Had this to do with her brother, or her boy ? Little Edward lay there beside her, with laboured breathing and a cough that seemed to come from a distance. His high forehead seemed empty, his

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eye restless; his hands were no longer a small boy's rough little fists, they were ethereal. At times she would hasten up to him, just to be sure he was there. Ah me! it had come to that; but merciful heavens—surely she was not going to lose him? She seemed to recognise her brother's suffering in this of her own, and each time felt as though they were drawn together in it. Her boy's fate grew to be one with Ragni's. In wakeful nights and during anxious days, both these destinies became so entangled and interwoven that to her mind they seemed to depend on one decision.

Until now her religion had chiefly been a desire for freedom and an unflinching love of truth. In her great anxiety this became fatalism, unbending, mystical fate. Everything startled her; she was always seeing signs and warnings. It seemed as though the boy could only lie on the side that was affected, otherwise it pained him so that he cried out . . . and each time she helped him, she could not make this out at all. She propped him up with air-cushions; he replied by heartrending entreaties to be left in peace. She no longer knew what was right or wrong. He would not even let her come near his legs; he always wanted to have his knees bent and the one knee in a certain position over the other, . . . and she had to yield to these inexplicable fancies and let herself be set aside as superfluous and troublesome. Was this to show her that she must accustom herself to the idea that she was always in the way?

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In the end this would quite wear her out. Her fright from the last time she had moved him till the next time she would have to do it, would have been more than enough. But all the fancies and ideas she took into her head nearly drove her mad; she spoke to no one about it. This new phase with the legs seemed to her so hopelessly mystical in its unreasonableness, that it made her afraid of the boy; he was no longer her boy. Just by chance later on she discovered a good deal of swelling round the ankles. She had always heard that this was the beginning of the end; she could scarcely drag herself down the stairs to the study, where the minister sat in a cloud of smoke. He saw her enter pale and terrified in her white night-dress.

"My dear, what is the matter?" He listened to her, went up with her, and looked at the swelling, fell on his knees by the bedside, burying his face in his hand; he was praying. Across his father's head she heard the short hurried breathing of the little fellow, saw the shining yet indifferent look he turned on him. She, too, would have prayed; but at that moment the boy pushed his father away with his hand; he could not bear the smell of tobacco. In that way he pushed her away from a possible prayer.

Dr. Kent's kind smile, his quiet, comforting assurance that the illness was the same as when he first had discovered the inflammation, that no worse symptom had set in, and that the swelling probably came from the strained position of the knees, relieved them so that Josephine cried for

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joy. He examined various matters, thereby confirming what he had already said.

That night Josephine slept better than she had done for long, but still she felt weaker than ever before.

Some time passed ; one evening the minister and Dr. Kent came upstairs ; there was a certain solemnity about them. Josephine lay dressed on the bed, raised herself so as to get up but both Kent and the minister begged her to lie down again. Dr. Kent told her that Fru Kallem had died the day before. Both the men looked at Josephine ; she closed her eyes. For a while there was complete silence. But seeing repeated twitches in her face, Tuft hastened to say :

"Under these circumstances, Josephine, it can only be for Edward's good. Of course he will feel it deeply now, but he will get over it. It will but benefit him." Josephine turned away her head. Her eyes remained closed ; then the tears gushed forth.

He felt at that moment that he had said something studied ; indeed, that he had been guilty of brutality. He had changed much during their boy's illness and that time of mutual anxiety. These words from former days—coming as they did just then in her smarting grief ; uttered by the bed of their own sick child—became his silent companions, full of independent life : "they were messages from God."

Until he let fall those words, Josephine had always prayed silently whenever her husband prayed ; since then she could do it no longer.

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She felt as she did in the beginning of their married life, when he had always expected her to join in all his overweening wishes and desires. In those days he had noticed nothing, but now he felt it at once. But just on that account, he felt he must have support, must have it chiefly in prayers for his sick child. So he turned to his friends at the meeting-house ; he was sure of them. The painful events of those days ; his fear for his boy's life ; his joyless, wounded love all collected into one violent outburst: he begged them to pray with him, he besought God's mercy. Could he but be found worthy of higher communion with God, then the trial would not be too hard.

He was radiant with the strength of his faith, as he went home and told about it. There were few like him when he was thus powerfully moved ; but it happened so seldom.

Josephine's state of health became alarming. The want of fresh air and regular sleep week after week, the loss of appetite and the constant anxiety, all began to tell upon this strong and healthy nature. Tuft spoke to Kent about it secretly ; but there was nothing to be done as long as she would do nothing herself.

Whilst he was carefully watching her every movement, he was obliged one day, against his will, to tell her that Ragni was not to be buried there, but at the nearest country church. Thereupon his brother-in-law made known his indignation and loathing in the strongest possible way. Undoubtedly it was aimed at the community at large, but mostly at them.

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over and thus do her a last service? Ah, if one could be as good as that!

The following night Josephine went downstairs to her husband who was asleep. Her hair was let down; she looked like one bewitched, or walking in her sleep, with her great hollow-eyed face surrounded by the long black hair, with eyes staring fixedly over the lamp she held in her hand. He sat up and would have got out of bed. She stayed him with her hand, and said, in a monotonous voice:

"I wish to speak to you, Ole; I cannot sleep. My brother's wife wants to take away our boy."

He felt all the blood rush to his heart.

"What do you say?" he whispered.

"We have been too hard, we two. Now we shall have to pay for it; and she will not be satisfied with less."

"Dear Josephine, you are not yourself. Let us fetch help!" He started up.

"Yes, I am going to get help. All who can pray must come now! Do you hear, Ole?"

"But, dearest——"

"Or do you not think that you all are stronger than she is; do you not think so? The other day you came home so happy from the prayer meeting—oh, you know them, make them come, do make them come, Ole, do you hear?" She began sobbing and crying: "It is but a Christian's duty to bring help here. They cannot look on and see her take him from us!"

Her voice died away in a long wailing sound. He was sitting on the edge of the bed, and had

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put on his under-garments, but stopped now with his trousers in his hand.

"My dear, my dear, only believe it is God who has the power and none other. Josephine, you are ill!"

He was much distressed, and hastened to get on his clothes.

"Will you really go and fetch them?" she asked, much pleased, and put down the lamp. "Thank you, I knew you would. I assure you solemnly, Ole, that it is urgent!"

He did make haste but said:

"You know, Josephine, we must be careful when we pray for non-spiritual things."

This made her uneasy; she stretched out her hands to him. Everything she had on was loose and open, the sleeves slipped from her shoulders—she had grown so fearfully thin—a great fear came over him. Her wild countenance, delirious words, emaciated form. . . .

"God bless you, Josephine, do not exert yourself too much in prayer, you might break down completely, you have grown so weak!"

"Do you not believe, then, Ole?" flashed from her like lightning.

"Yes, yes! But suppose God's will be not our will, dear child?" There arose in him the painful recollection of Andersen's death-bed scene. "You would pray for a miracle!"

"Yes, yes! of course! Certainly! What else should we pray for?"

"We pray to be granted communion with God, Josephine; at all events that is what I do. For

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then all is well, my soul is strengthened, and often I am in such sore need of it."

"It is written, 'Soften the heart of the Lord. Is that not right? Soften the heart of God? Speak, Ole. Soften the heart of God? Answer me!'"

"He was kneeling down in front of the stove with a piece of firewood in one hand and a knife in the other, he would have lighted the fire; she was so thinly clad; but he stopped now and looked up at her sorrowfully. "I dare not pray for a miracle, Josephine; I am not worthy." As he was saying this his agitation increased, and he was so overcome that he had to put down what he had in his hands and cover his face. But when he looked up again he started to his feet; if she had had her arms full of the most costly china and had let it fall so that it was shivered to a thousand pieces . . . she could not possibly have looked different, more paralysed, more horror-struck. Her hands were outstretched as though over what she had let fall, her eyes were fastened on him, her senses gone; it seemed as though the next instant she must fall. Not so however; for when he seized hold of her, she woke up, collected her thoughts and without further warning said quickly:

"Then we must send for my brother! He only can make her leave our boy alone." The words proceeding from that strange train of thought were like a suggestion to him. A thousand times he had thought the same, Colonel Baier's case had called forth the desire, and many had advised him to it; but until now he had been ashamed.

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A few minutes later, he was on his way to Dr. Kent, who must be consulted first.

It was a sharp, clear night. By day the roads were in a state of thaw, but frozen again at night, so he had to be careful ; it was not easy, pursued as he was by his thoughts. What became of the Bible's dogmas of the creation, the deluge, and all the rest—what was it all worth, when death was at the door ? What then was number one, what number twenty ?

None would wake up at Kent's house ; he rang and rang without hearing any sound himself ; the bell must have been removed. Then he began to knock, it sounded hollow and hard, and to him it seemed as though death were knocking ; it was so, too. At last a servant appeared rather grumbling, but as it was the minister she went to rouse the doctor. Patient Dr. Kent came down, brought him into his room and listened to him. He would with pleasure go to Kallem ; had he thought they would have allowed it, he would have done it long since.

When Tuft got back Josephine was upstairs with the child ; she misunderstood him, she thought her brother was coming at once, and as he had not appeared by seven o'clock, by eight, by nine, she was afraid he would not come and became much agitated ; her husband was obliged to go again to fetch her brother and the doctor. Kent was not to be found at once ; but sent to say that Kallem and he would come at eleven o'clock precisely. They came, too, at that hour ; but the minister had been called away, so there was no one to receive them. Kallem had not put his foot

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inside their door since the day he had arrived in the town. Since the preceding night Josephine had not had her brother out of her thoughts, which is always the case when one longs for any one ; but when at last Kent and he came up the thickly-carpeted stairs she was not thinking of him ; she stood bending over the boy giving him a drink ; when their knock came at the door she started up and could not utter a sound. The door opened nevertheless. Kent let Kallem go in first.

He was met by a slight scream. She nearly dropped what she was holding ; for what did he look like ! It was death himself who came, bony and mowing all around with sharp scythe. It was not to help her, but to take the boy from her ; she felt it directly.

Shortly and mercilessly he looked at her, without a spark of compassion, although she too was worn with grief. As he advanced further in he looked at the boy, and from that moment she ceased to exist for him, she slipped on one side. Kent went up and greeted her kindly, then went back to Kallem. And now the usual thing happened—the same that had happened to Kallem himself when he was together with Dr. Meek—namely, Dr. Kent accepted all Kallem's impressions, the child's appearance seemed new to him and frightened him considerably. All that he had formerly put away from him, showed itself of its own accord—"Empyème ?" he whispered in French to Kallem who did not answer, but drew nearer, felt the boy's faint, weak pulse, tapped him lightly here and there, listened to the quick short

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breathing, looked at the temperature list and at what he had last coughed up. Then followed a short consultation between the doctors ; Josephine heard every scrap of it, although she stood a little way from them, on the other side of the bed—the child's bed now stood where his father's used to stand ; but she did not understand the technical terms, therefore could not seize the meaning. She felt that some evil was hanging over her ; her hands were pressed together on her bosom while her eyes wandered from one to the other. At last Kent approached a few steps : he wished to ask if they might be allowed to insert the point of a syringe, fine as a needle, in the cavity of the chest.

"Is it an operation ?" she whispered as she sought support.

"We shall be able to tell then," he answered, equally softly. She sank down on a chair. Her brother did not wait for her answer, but pulled out his instrument case and took out of it something shiny, long and thin, bending down with it over the boy. She saw nothing more ; nor could she think of anything either—she only tried not to give way ; she heard the boy whimper and call repeatedly "Mother" in a frightened voice ; she had not the strength to rise up, dared not move. She heard Kent say : "Now it is over, my boy ;" but could not see what was over.

Little Edward whimpered and cried, and insisted on having his mother up to his bed. So she tried once or twice, but it was quite impossible ; her brother acted like a weight on her, although he never even looked her way.

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The door opened and shut; he had gone, and she breathed more freely. Kent went up to her at once, kind and sympathetic.

"There must be an operation," he whispered.

"What for?" She knew it would be of no use; she had seen it written in her brother's face.

"Because everything must be tried," answered Kent.

With the most miserable little voice, the boy begged his mother to come to him.

"I am coming." She knelt down beside him and began to cry.

"They hurt me," the boy said, complaining.

Ah, if she could have answered: "It was to make you well that you may get out again." But even Kent dared not say that. She struggled to find courage to forbid the operation, but she dared not, she was afraid of her brother. Kent stood there waiting; she became conscious of that at last, and looked despairingly at him. He stooped down to her.

"Your brother generally sends some of the hospital people to disinfect and arrange everything," he said, gently.

"Is it to be to-day?" whispered she, weeping bitterly.

"No; but the cleaning and airing must be begun to-day. The adjoining rooms must be used, too." She had laid her head down again beside the boy, she made no answer; then she heard him go.

When the minister came home he rushed up at once to the sick room and was not a little sur-

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prised to find his mother there and—Sissel Aune! The latter was keeping watch, the boy was cross, and did not want any one near him but his mother; not even his father, for he could still smell tobacco about him, although he had given up smoking. Tuft found Josephine lying on his sofa in the study, overcome with despair, and talking quite incoherently; "Doomed to death!" she would answer to nearly all his questions.

One of the deaconesses came over in the afternoon and assumed the management of affairs; she brought strange servants with her; their home seemed broken up, and the scouring and cleaning sounded like the planing of a coffin. Their own servants all sorrowful, poor old grandmother in tears; and when they heard the noise caused by moving the boy's bed into another room, they sat trembling hand in hand.

Fancy, now, if any one were to say: "It is a good thing for the parents, that their boy is dying. Of course they can't think so now, but they will come to see it in that light;" fancy if any one were brutal enough to say such a thing to them? Tuft felt bound to speak to Josephine about it, and confessed that these words would have wounded him deeply. She pressed his hand in silence.

When the evening came and all was quiet, they were both upstairs with the boy and they fancied he already bore the mark of death! He fell asleep holding his mother's hand, and then Tuft gently led her away. She consented to be led now; an extra bed had been put up in the spare

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room, it was part of all the moving and arranging that had gone on.

The next day from early morning the parents were in with the little boy. As soon as they left, he was to be moved back to his old room where all was ready for the operation.

At ten o'clock the doctors came. Josephine was lying on the sofa in the study. She stopped her ears as soon as she heard them; the carpets were taken up so that the slightest creak of a boot was heard. She would not be comforted, nor let herself be reasoned with, and fell into that half-unconscious state she had before been in; she wanted to go up to the boy, he might die on their hands.

The minister was anxious to speak to the doctors; but she hung round him, she would go, too; so he could not leave. If any one just moved a foot upstairs, she knew who it was, and if the doctors moved at the same time, there must be something going on, she doubled herself up and sat crouching there with her hands to her ears. She would not let herself be taken to another room, she would stay there and be tortured; at times she went up to Tuft seeking a haven, she had worn herself out, was tired to death. "Help me!" she whispered, assuring him that her reason and her life were at stake, and that she had always known that the time would come when she would be thus miserable.

Tuft persuaded her to lie down with wet bandages on her forehead, he prayed aloud, and his love for her was so powerful that it quieted her.

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"Thank you, Ole, thank you!" she grew calmer.

All at once. "He is screaming!" she exclaimed; and, raising herself, would have got up. The minister assured her he heard nothing; but at the same instant they both heard it. "Yes, yes," she said, and tried to go. Tuft put both his arms round her, praying for her and blessing her. Again she calmed down. And now all was silent.

Upstairs all was going on rapidly. Kallem took the responsibility of chloroforming the boy, and the screams the parents had heard were on account of the flannel bag which Kent held over his face; the boy pushed it away; he was suffocating. "Mother, mother!" he cried; but he soon became unconscious. The old grandmother in a clean cotton gown sat by the pillow on the other side and held his hand; the old woman was trembling; but there she sat and intended to sit until all was over. No one had asked her to do it; she had herself asked God. But as soon as the boy was unconscious, Kallem said to her quite politely that now she would have to go. Slowly and silently she left the room.

Then he began. An incision, eight centimetres in length, was made between the ribs in the right side. He inserted blunt instruments into the aperture, got hold of the end of the rib-bone and sawed off a small piece; the matter streamed out of the wound.

Here they were all startled by a wild shriek behind them. Quick as lightning Josephine had opened the door and seen these white operating

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coats, and Kallem, his hands covered with blood, rummaging in her child's chest—down she fell on to the floor.

"Was the door not locked?" asked Kallem. Sissel came running from the inner room, the minister from outside, they carried her out between them.

"Mind the temperature," was whispered over to the deaconess; "And lock the door!"

"But Sissel——?"

"She must stay away!"

Presently they heard her at the door, but took no notice. A tube was inserted in the cavity of the chest which was well syringed, and a tow bandage carefully put on the side. The tube was to be left there for several days and the temperature of the room day and night was to be kept at 15°. Kallem soon retired to the next room with his instruments and was out of the house before any one, except those present at the operation, knew that he had finished.

The old grandmother, poor thing, had just come up again to listen at the door, when Sissel, who was back in the room, came out, carrying something under her apron. In passing she told her that it was all over. So the old woman ventured in; but on seeing the child lying there pale and quiet, she lost all command over herself, went out again directly, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that she managed to reach her own house.

In ordinary life it was impossible to make any sort of impression on this specimen of fossilisation from the border of the sea, crushed flat by her

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pietistical views and walled at the north side of the house. The only one she seemed to take any interest in was the boy. Her whole house was his playroom ; he was allowed to drag in there almost anything he had a fancy to, she put it away again and liked nothing better than tidying up after he had been there. Now, one would think that he would have been devoted to her on that account, but strange to say, from the moment he fell ill, he would hardly look at his grandmother. In spite of all its severity, his mother's blunt manner had taken his fancy ; he had been greatly worried by his grandmother's devotion, interspersed as it was with scoldings and threats, full of prayers which he had to learn by heart, and of Bible stories which he never understood. Now that he was so ill and weak, she was not allowed to talk to him. But it was hard on the old grandmother. Her son neglected her too, now that Josephine was more accessible. Had it not been for the coming of the deaconess, the operation might have taken place without the old woman's having heard anything of it.

A few hours later, she crept upstairs again, listened outside, could hear nothing, thought all was over and ventured to look in. Sissel sat there nodding ; but looked up at once.

"Is he alive ?" asked the old woman.

"Yes," answered Sissel in a voice barely audible, but her hope of him was not much greater either. The old grandmother could not bear more, she turned away. A couple of hours after she came again, and he was still alive. This time

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she had brought her spectacles with her and an old much-loved book ; she meant to sit there till the end. Sissel could have a sleep. So she was told what there was to do, and Sissel lay down on Josephine's bed.

It was six o'clock in the evening before the minister put his head into the room—it was only now that he dared leave Josephine for a moment. He saw his mother sitting there with her spectacles and her old book of sermons, he drew nearer searching her face like a book ; in it he read : " he lives ! " She nodded as Sissel had done before and conveying the same meaning. He shuddered as he looked at the boy's deathly pale, worn-out face, and went away.

The house was quite quiet. In the kitchen which lay some way off, they all spoke softly, the doors were well oiled and the carpets laid down in the passages. The minister came in on tiptoe every hour and received always the same answer ; there was still life. Everybody came and went noiselessly as though spirits were moving about. In the spare room where Josephine lay, signs took the place of words.

The night was if possible more silent ; grandmother had gone away, but Sissel was there ; fire was burning in the kitchen and a watch was kept in case there should be anything to fetch ; the minister was up and awake and went about backwards and forwards. But toward three o'clock both he and the watch fell asleep. When grandmother came in at four o'clock, Sissel was asleep too ; she sat down in her seat ; there was not a

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sound of any kind till near seven o'clock. Grandmother looked after the stove and attended to the medicine—surely little Edward breathed more easily, or was she deceiving herself?

A little before seven the door was opened slowly. She expected to see her son; but it was Josephine who came. Her large face under the disordered hair, and her wild eyes looked worse than ever in the dim light, she alarmed the old woman, who for long had been afraid for her mind. But Josephine stood still by the door, she heard Sissel's steady breathing but not the boy's; she dared not go further in. The old grandmother saw this and nodded encouragingly. A few steps forward and the mother saw her boy—fearfully pale and without a sign of life. But grandmother nodded again, so she ventured further forward. The curtains were still drawn, so she did not see well; but then she thought he breathed. She knelt down . . . was he breathing easier, or . . . ? She was so sure in her belief that he was doomed to death, that she could not hear what she really did hear. She listened in the greatest anxiety, wondering, considering, holding her own breath the while, and only when she was quite sure that his breathing was easier, did she herself unconsciously breathe strongly and rapidly full in the boy's face. The warm whiff awoke him, he opened his eyes and looked at his mother, trying to collect his thoughts. Yes, it was mother who had come back again. His eyes grew more lively, and brighter than she had seen them for weeks past, they gazed at her until her own filled with

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tears. Not a word did he say, nor moved a limb from fear of the old pain ; and to her it seemed as though his spirit would fly away if he moved or if she touched him or uttered a sound. Indeed she thought her breathing was too loud, so she smothered it, and neither moved her hands nor turned her head ; in this immovable stillness it was as though they were under the shadow of gathering wings. The hour was like the one in which she had given birth to him, when she heard the first gurgling sound of his living voice. And now life was beginning a second time with trembling breath. His eyes were as light in the snow. She could never weary of their fresh brightness, they floated together, his and hers, she wished it would never end.

But the boy was overcome by the power of her eyes and gave himself up to the safe feeling of her presence, so he shut his eyes again, opened them once or twice just to try . . . yes, she was there, and so fell asleep.

Soon after she was down in the study. Outside was bright day ; in it should come ! She drew up the blinds, the daylight filled the high room with the life of life, filled her own soul to its innermost recesses—she pushed open the door to the spare room and placed herself in the doorway.

Tuft lay there broad and strong with outstretched arms, a bushy head of hair, his high forehead still shining with yesterday's perspiration, and a smile about his mouth. The light half wakened him. "Ole !" she said, he opened his

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eyes wide, but shut them again ; he strove to settle in his memory what he had just had a glimpse of, and at the same instant from out of all this light came the words of Josephine's voice : " He lives ! "

Thus, on Sunday, a man spoke from the church pulpit, taking his text from his own experiences.

He spoke of what is highest and greatest for us all.

One man forgets it in the midst of his hard struggles, a second because of his zeal, a third on account of stubbornness, a fourth in his own wisdom, a fifth from sheer force of habit, and we have all more or less been wrongly taught on the subject. " For were I now to ask those who are listening to me, just because I ask in this place, from this pulpit, you would all unthinkingly answer : ' Faith is greatest ! ' Nay, but in truth it is not. Watch by thy child lying gasping for breath and on the brink of death ; or see thy wife slipping gradually after the child away to that outermost edge, worn out by fear and many night-watches, then love will teach thee this, that life is first. And from this day, never again will I first seek God or God's will in any form of speech, in any sacrament, or in any book or at any place, as though He were there present ; no, rather let me seek His presence in life—in life won back from the depths of the fear of death, in the victory of light, in the beauty of devotion, in the community of the living. God's most important words to us are those of life ; our truest worship of him is

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love for all living things. However much it be a matter of course, this doctrine was what I needed more than any one. That it is which I have put from me in different ways and from various reasons—and oftenest just latterly. But never again shall either words or signs be for me the most important ; but, contrariwise, the everlasting revelation of life. Never again will I let myself be immured in any doctrine ; but will let my will be set free by the warmth of life. Never again will I judge mankind by the codes of an old-world justice, if the justice of our day cannot use the language of love. Before God never ! And this because I believe in Him the God of life, and His incessant revelation in life."

XII

THAT afternoon Tuft received a most unusual visit. There was a gentle knock at the door, and at the first "Come in" no one appeared. The second time the door was opened cautiously by Sören Pedersen, and after him by slow degrees came Aase, very shy.

Their business was nothing less than to thank the minister for his sermon that day! "For nobody can live without God! at all events not ignorant people; it doesn't do; no, it doesn't do at all. And so we come like the prodigal son—Aase I suppose must be the prodigal daughter . . . (come forward do—well, just as you please!) and we wish that you will pray for God's mercy for us both." And their request was granted with all the earnest fervour that Tuft could put into a prayer. Sören said they were going direct to Dr. Kallem. "He is certainly the best man in the world, at any rate in the town. But he is mistaken in these matters. For there exists both God and spirits, and we will go and tell him so."

Tuft had himself fixed to go to Kallem that same afternoon. He was grateful to him, and longed to acknowledge that had it not been for

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their cruel wronging of Ragni, not even the events of the past days would have sufficed to show him the treasures of life. He wished particularly to justify Josephine by taking her faults on his shoulders. Busy with his heavy load of dogmas, like a post-horse laden with bags full of letters, she had always been obliged to keep him company, whether she would or no ; and this injustice had made her hard and suspicious.

As he set out on his way an hour or so later, all their childhood was vivid before him. He wanted then to be a missionary ; perhaps now he might be one in earnest ! To propound a doctrine of evolution or progress in religion was worthy of a mission, and he thought of undertaking it. The God of dogmas and his priests of olden days, must be vanquished and overcome like the idols and miracle-makers of the heathens. What though he dreamed of becoming a bishop, strong in his theological powers, well, there was a dangerous bishopric—vacant for easily explained reasons—here in Norway.

Sigrid was standing on the steps of the upper entrance as Pastor Tuft came across the yard with long strides. She was dressed in black with a black silk kerchief over her fair hair.

"The doctor is not at home," she said in her quiet way. He turned round and went toward the hospital with the same decision. There stood Andersen's widow, also dressed in black and in a cap with black ribbons.

"Are you still in mourning for your husband ?"

"No, this time it is for Fru Kallem."

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"Is Kallem here?"

"No, he went home a little while ago."

That's a mistake on your part, thought Tuft, and turned his steps in the direction of the woods; he liked having a good long walk.

There were many people out walking; they all greeted him with joyful sympathy; it was not to be mistaken. Widow Andersen's stern face had cast a shadow over him; but it vanished before the kind looks of every one else. Again the same impetuous courage came over him as it had recently done—the courage peculiar to all newly-converted people. Just by the hospital he met Søren Pedersen and his wife who were coming away from Kallem; they too were going for a walk this bright Sunday evening so full of messages of spring.

"Was he at home?" asked Tuft.

"Yes, your reverence," replied Pedersen, highly delighted.

"Well, what did the doctor say?"

"I was much pleased with what he said, your reverence. There are two kinds of persons, said he; the one kind believe only what they know; the other kind do likewise; but that which they know cannot be proved—at least only to themselves."

"He is right," and Tuft laughed as he hurried away. But the moment he was alone, the sixteenth chapter of St. Mark, sixteenth verse, was upon him; it lay in ambush for him like a spy from his "orthodox" period. "He that believeth not shall be damned." God has no respect for

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"two kinds of persons." Tuft began eagerly to defend: "The sixteenth chapter, from the ninth verse upwards, is a later addition which the oldest manuscripts do not recognise. If this passage be not genuine, then no such dreadful passage can be found in any of the other three gospels. The fourth, in which it occurs, has thereby damned itself. No, life is everything, and faith is the wondrous road to the explanation of life, that is to say, to God. By this means we shall attain the highest communion with Him, if not here, then in the next world. Faith is not for judging, but for guidance. To condemn people for their faith's sake might have been thought right in olden times; in our day it shocks us. God reveals Himself in our understanding in a higher light than that." Again he hastened back into the yard.

But again Sigrid came out on the steps. "The doctor is not at home." Her eyes avoided his; but she remained standing there immovable, her face framed in by the kerchief. The house at her back seemed like a secret, select community full of mutual steadfastness, something he was shut out from.

Now he understood.

The price of entering there was greater than he had thought. He went home humbled, and did not mention it to Josephine.

This repulsion led to further claims on him: it urged him on along the road that would unite brother and sister together, which was the condition laid down for all else. He acknowledged openly that he had been jealous of his brother-in-

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law. This episode in his private life was the cause of much of the narrow-mindedness of his preaching.

He received help from outside. At first there were wondering questions, a reserved manner, which wounded him, and at times made him doubtful; but soon it came to an open fight with his nearest followers, and that urged him on. His old friend, the former porter, seemed to have longed for an opportunity of freeing himself from a debt of gratitude that weighed on him; he made a great to do and called in auxiliary troops all the way from the capital. Teachers in seminaries, schoolmasters, scientific travellers, and a few clergymen attacked Pastor Tuft at the meeting-house with all sorts of theological weapons. First and foremost he learnt to speak distinctly, for the greater part of what they attacked him for was nothing but a misunderstanding; but he had occasion for capabilities and knowledge which he had not needed before. During this first month Josephine felt merely tired and indifferent—she had grown weaker than she could understand; but after that she began following in the steps of the peasant lad, who in days gone by had captivated her heart by his bright faith; would he come back to her?

An incident which she concealed from her husband had kept her back and prevented her gaining strength, therefore she was so languid. She too had quietly been over to her brother's the first time she was able to go out; she, too, had been met by Sigrid on the steps telling her that he was not at

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home;—but she had seen him standing on the veranda as she came up. With great difficulty she reached home again.

She had felt the deepest pity for him and was ready to make all manner of allowances; but his inexorableness aroused her opposition. Josephine had not the slightest idea that she herself had been jealous of Ragni, therefore she could not know that it affected her manner. She considered herself to have been at fault in being intolerant toward one who was guilty. As Sissel Aune sat upstairs beside the boy, and told her all about Ragni, how she had been lovable to the very last, she felt how unnatural it was to have overlooked Ragni's goodness of heart and Kallem's love for her. But beyond this intolerance she did not consider herself to blame.

The disappointment was great, and the consequences might have been serious if it had not been that she was so much taken up just then with her husband's struggles. A person of confused ideas, who has chiefly lived a defiant life, can only be freed when some great event happens. And such an event it was, the day that Ole said to her:

"On this, Josephine, we must stake both the living and our fortune."

Three months had gone by when she, revived by the fight, thought herself strong enough to take up the case with her brother. She wrote to him and said that whatever they might have done wrong—they would wish to hear it right out; they ought to be worthy to be accused. Their

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gratitude to him was great, as they repented of their former intolerance, and wished to make every possible amends to that spirit of charity and justice which they had misjudged.

It was an excellent letter; her husband said so too.

But the day went and there came no answer. It was a mercy that just at that time Tuft was fighting some of his hardest battles. At the meeting-house, and afterwards in church, he had made use of the words Josephine had concluded her letter with.

"Justice and charity," without distinction of faith (as in the story of the good Samaritan), is the essence of Christianity. Therefore must everything be meted out with this measure, and first and foremost the doctrine itself, so that the smallest particle weighed and found wanting fell, like the theology of distant and cruel times, before the revelation of justice in our day.

That very same day he was summoned on this account to a debate; three meetings were held in the course of the week, all of them overcrowded. The principal speaker against him was a clergyman and theological publisher from the metropolis. The doctrine of hell was almost the sole subject, and Tuft maintained that what St. Paul said about it was widely different from what was in the Book of Revelations.

According to St. Paul, life here and in the next world was a state of progression, which ended by God becoming "all in all." This doctrine was up to the standard of both justice and charity. And a great impression was made, as his resonant

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voice, in its rapid west-country tones, shouted out across the tightly packed assembly, asking whether they thought there would ever be an end of wars and persecutions as long as the doctrine of hell, with all its cruel revenge and brutality was taught in all the schools and churches as the justice and charity of God. His opponents were "thoroughly in the style of the doctrine of hell," for they did all they could to condemn and stigmatise him as heretical.

However, there was but one opinion amongst the auditors—that for clearness of language and powers of persuasion Tuft was vastly superior to the others.

Dr. Kallem was present at the last meeting. He saw Josephine sitting there with flaming eyes, and the next day, toward evening, his answer came.

She was walking up and down before the house, watching her boy at play with the garden-hose, when the letter was given her. She recognised the writing directly, but trembled so that she could not open it. She was horrified to see how weak she still was; would she never get back the strength of her youth?

Then she went up to her room and locked herself in. It was a long letter; she turned it over and sat down to consider whether she would let Tuft read it first. But possibly there might be something about him which he was not to see.

She opened the letter.

Not a word from her brother, not a single word to her. The first that she saw was written in a

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strange hand, the next too, and the following after that, the whole thing, but in two different handwritings. There were some sheets of paper fastened together, some letters, a few loose scraps—not a word from Edward.

What did it signify? Involuntarily Josephine selected the least of all the papers, a little scrap of three lines:

"They destroyed my good name and I knew it not. For I knew not that I had it before it was destroyed."

On another scrap there were these words faintly written:

"Forgive them, they know not what they do!"

This delicate, flowing handwriting was of course Ragni's. Josephine began to tremble without knowing why.

Then there was a letter, written in another hand, the first words of which were in red ink. No signature. But as she read that Kallem was not to see it, she guessed it was a love-letter from Karl Meek, which Kallem must have found afterwards. What had Josephine to do with that?

Hastily she read the first words, but was surprised at his calling her "you," and that he spoke of a sorrow which he would have borne alone, but which now had fallen upon her too, a slander——? Had she been slandered?

All through the most respectful terms. When was it written? There was no date given; but the writer of the letter was abroad; so it was after their life together here. The letter was one

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long wail of despair, a grief so genuine, never had she read of anything greater.

Josephine's hand shook so that she was obliged to put the letter down on the table.

She read how Karl through all this cruel slander could not think of any one or anything else ; she read how he in that way had come to love Ragni. Josephine saw this love, engendered by sorrow, gratitude, devotion, find vent in pure and touching words.

Ragni innocent ? Good God, was she innocent ? Then all those harrowing scenes between her and Edward, as Death separated them inch by inch from one another (Sissel Aune had so often described them to her), they must indeed have been hard to bear ! Yes, now she understood why he had driven away that day with her body, and had Karl Meek by his side ; only she could not understand how he had survived it.

There was a knock at the door ; she started in her seat. But it was only the servant girl who came to ask her to go down to supper. She could not answer, again there was a knock. "No, no !" she managed to articulate as she writhed in sorrow and shame. She must go to her brother, she would go to him, if she went there on her knees.

But here were more papers, and she felt as though her brother was standing over her commending her to read them. She trembled and read :

"Now that I am about to copy what I have written down after many trials and failures about

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my childhood and my first marriage, I feel myself to be so tired—so done up. I had intended to write a few words as beginning, and looked forward to it. Now it is too late for that. Now I can only just tell to you, 'the white pasha' of my life, how it has fared with me. I have told it briefly for it was torture to me; and I have only told it so that you may defend my cause should any one still think it worth while to speak evil of me after I am gone. Dear friend, I do not murmur. I have lived as purely and nobly as I could live; it has only been too, too short. Know, that I had thrown myself away from sheer horror of something still worse—and then you came and took me out of the deep waters and giving me in keeping of good people I found peace and all good things—till you could come again and bear me away to yourself. To think that I might share all in your home and yourself too without deserving it; for I felt that often; but I was happy all the same.

"I did not suffice for you here, I know it; but now that the end is near, it does not seem to matter. You would have borne with me as long as it lasted, I feel so sure of that.

"My friend, were I now to tell you all I feel of gratitude and admiration for you, you would not understand it; it has seemed so natural to you that all the happiness of your life came from me. And that was what was most beautiful in mine too.

"But you will not read this until the day when I no longer am sitting in this chair, and

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nothing can imprint my memory so vividly on you and make it live on in you, as one long, everlasting :

“THANKS.”

And this was the marriage they had considered not worthy of the name ! What was Josephine's compared to this !

She slipped from the chair down upon her knees. She went and sobbed—and forced herself to silence that no one might discover her crouching there in the shame of her crime. She folded her hands on Ragni's letter, and laid her head down on them, whispering : “Forgive me, forgive me !” though she knew that none could hear her, and that none, none could forgive her.

In a moment, she understood that Ragni had been pure in her first marriage ; and that there too she had been slandered ! The papers telling how this marriage had been arranged—she did not need to read them, she could not. With clammy hands she collected all the papers together, Ole must read them. Now he must help her ; her life was at stake. She had committed murder, the murder of an innocent person. Not by her words or prompting, for she had said nothing. But it was just her silence, and her having that very first day repelled Ragni—just on that account the poor thing had been hopelessly lost ; this all flashed through her mind like lightning ; she lay there like one deaf and paralysed. The doom she had read in her brother's eyes, the death-doom—and she had not been

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mistaken, it was not intended for her son, it was intended for herself. She deserved death!

She was seized with horror, a cold sweat broke out over her like a stunning blow—now it was at hand!

Yes, now it was at hand! She had thought all was over when her boy was well again; but no, now it had come, now that she had regained her happiness in her husband and a firm footing altogether—now it overtook and aimed a deadly blow at her.

She hurried down to the study whilst Tuft was still at his supper and put the envelope on his desk; she had on her hat and a shawl, and now she ran rather than walked toward her brother's house; now it must break or bend.

Passing by a short cut she came right on the church. She remembered Ole's last sermon and the tears came to her eyes; for only think what it would have been if their mutual life had had such free scope and such aims from the first! She wept as she hurried down toward the terrible house. She could see the white wall of the other house shining through the foliage to the left, the house Kule lived in, Kule the murderous instrument. No, no, no, she had not asked him to come; she had had no share in it whatever! Yes, she had heard it suggested and had thought it was quite a fair proceeding. Some had looked upon it as a good joke, others had taken it seriously, even religiously; Josephine could remember each word to which she had tacitly agreed; each thought, too, that she had had.

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Murder, murder! She knew there was no forgiveness for her; of what use was it to go to her brother? He had saved her child—but beyond that he would have nothing whatever to do with her. All the same, from henceforth she was nailed to that spot; even though she might die there. She ran with all her might.

Her life was branded, after this she could never again look an honest person in the face. Cruelly and coldly she had killed an utterly, wholly innocent being, and had laid bare her brother's home! Henceforth where could she live? What should she do now? Seek her just punishment! Yes, but she would administer it herself. But first she must see him, hear him, and herself speak to him—yes, for she had something to say; he did not even know how she loved him and had always loved him, he hardly knew her. She ran on, weeping.

She saw him standing in the yard between the house and the out-houses, bending over something he was carrying; she saw him above the currant and gooseberry bush hedge visible through the opening of the taller fruit-trees. She shuddered, but she kept on her way. Soon she was under the trees of the park; then turned down to the yard; nothing divided them but the out-house wall; then she came quite forward.

He stood with turned-up sleeves—his cuffs were off—in a yellow tussore silk coat, the same probably in which he had arrived two years ago, washing a travelling trunk under the pump; all the labels pasted on by the railway people, one

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on top of the other, were to be taken off; was he thinking of going away? He was sunburnt and thin, seen in profile his face seemed sharper; then he heard her step and looked up—looked up into her tear-stained beseeching face! No trace of her former bright-coloured dresses; a dark cotton dress with a belt round her waist, a broad, shady, straw hat with a brown ribbon, a shawl hanging on her arm. Her tears burst forth, bitterly, despairingly: "Edward!" she could get no further.

For he dropped the trunk and drew himself upright; a voice with a sort of break in it said:

"I cannot forgive you, Josephine."

"Edward, let me explain myself!" She turned to the house, in horror and despair at his stern face; but he fancied she wanted to go in.

"You shall never enter there!" and he put his hands on his sides as though he were keeping guard.

XIII

TUFT left the supper-table and went into his study ; but he did not notice the envelope as he did not look at the desk. He went for a walk, which he often did in the evenings ; if Josephine had been down she would have gone with him, he thought. He walked for an hour ; it was Saturday and he got ready his sermon for the morrow. When he got home he sat down by the window with a book he was in want of ; he read, he dawdled about, and read again till ten o'clock.

He went up to bed but did not find Josephine, neither was she in her own room, in fact, nowhere all over the house. Then he went down to the study again, he would wait for her down there ; but where could she be ? Gone to see some sick person ? He knew of none. In mere absence of mind he took up the envelope as he passed the desk ; his name was outside—was it written in Josephine's hand ? He turned hot and went to the window the better to see. There was no seal ; but on the top of several papers lay a little note with the following words from Josephine :

“ I have gone to him for my life's sake.”

What was the meaning of this ?

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A quarter of an hour later Tuft was on his way past the church ; he, too, rather ran than walked. He was the only guilty one ; long ago it was he who had given Josephine to understand that Ragni had been unfaithful to her first husband, and had thereby started everything that had since happened ! And unless it had been that he was jealous of his brother-in-law, he would hardly have taken their breach with the church, their intercourse with scoffers, as sufficient reason for keeping away and avoiding them. Even if his brother-in-law were to answer that Josephine was not sufficiently a Christian to join in persecuting Ragni on that account ; nor could she for that reason at once think the worst of a freethinker, then Tuft would answer that it is not true Christians who do such things, but only those who are half-Christians. That man whose love for God has become the law of his life never judges ; but so much the more eagerly do the others do it. Josephine had been so situated that she could not become more than a half-Christian ; these theological studies stop a man's growth.

How clearly he saw it all now ! He could not bear, therefore, to think of her in her soul's distress ; he ran so fast that he arrived panting through the park, the yard, and up on the steps. The front door was locked—was it not more than ten o'clock ? He rang, and rang again, heard steps in the passage, it was the step of a man, Kallem himself opened the door.

“ Is Josephine not here ? ”

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"No."

"Has she not been here?"

"Yes, about an hour and a half ago."

"Well?"

"I forbade her to enter."

"You did not even speak to her?"

"No."

Then Tuft, throwing out his right hand: "Now you, too, are ruled by dogmas," turned his back on him and went off again. His broad hat over his broad shoulders had the effect of broadly accentuating his last words.

Shortly after eleven the bell rang again, just in the same way. Kallem came out at once, he had evidently not been in bed yet.

It was Tuft who was there again; but as far as Kallem could see, without being near him, he appeared like another man, horrified and harrowed.

"Where do you think she can have gone to, Edward?"

"I think she must have gone to Ragni's grave."

A choking sob, a visible welling-up of grief, and he turned and went away. His heavy foot-fall was heard far off through the stillness of the grove.

Toward one o'clock there was again a ring at the door, but this time it was only one single timid peal. Kallem heard it directly and came out from the room—he was still sitting up.

A woman stood there. Kallem, who was shortsighted, hurried up to her, but the voice

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proved to be Sissel Aune's. "Dear, kind doctor, be good and merciful!" Kallem thought she had come on his sister's behalf, and that something had happened; he shivered. But Sissel continued: "None but you can manage him; he gets quite mad every blessed night."

"Do you mean Aune?" shouted Kallem.

"Yes, he fancies he sees Kristen Larssen after him, so he rushes away through the town, into the wood and out on the high road; this is the third night, and I cannot stand it any longer. Dear, good doctor, I have no one but you to turn to," here she began to cry, "and no one else has any power over him but you."

Had the clever bookbinder and fiddler gone mad? Then had he freed himself from his power? Had he taken to drink again, was this delirium? No, no, he was "mad" from fear of Kristen Larssen's ghost. Kallem started directly with her.

The sky was clouded, and the night very dark; but a fresh northerly wind began to sweep the clouds away. It shook and rustled the trees by the roadside, whistling through the thick foliage and seeming to ask and ask all manner of things as they passed by. Was it not very strange that Aune, who had fooled people into believing in Kristen Larssen's ghost, should now be rushing about mad with terror of what he had himself set going? Every evening after dark, Sissel declared that Aune imagined Kristen Larssen was after him and going to take him to hell! At that instant a shriek was heard far off, one sharp,

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breathless call for help. It rose up like a spectre in the night, it seemed almost visible.

"There he is!" cried Sissel, clasping her hands. "Christ help us!" she shrieked, and began running.

But Kallem hurried after her: "You will only be slower like that, Sissel; go quietly—go quietly, I tell you!"

She obeyed at once, but turned eagerly to him: "Who but Satan can persecute a man like that!" she said, breathlessly. At the same moment a watch-dog began barking close by, it was startled by the cries and barked on without stopping. Kallem raised his voice above the barking.

"It does not follow that Aune is more beset by Satan, Sissel, than that angry bitch in there! Do you know how people found out Satan? They thought everything was created perfect and they were in want of somebody on whom to throw the blame when sin did come into the world."

The furious dog rushed at them just at that moment; Sissel fled over to Kallem.

"What a savage beast!" he exclaimed, and stooped to pick up a stone. The dog retreated a few paces. There came a fresh shriek, nearer than the first one, a call for help with a last expiring gasp; they shuddered, the very dog stopped short. Then it swung round and dashed past them in the direction of the ghost.

"God help us, now he will be hurt!" said Sissel, crying and hurrying onwards; "the mad man must not be exposed to the dog's attack!"

But they heard it bark as though a wild beast

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were confronting it and going to fasten its teeth in it ; so they both ran as hard as they could ; Kallem was at once far past Sissel. It could hardly be Aune who was in danger ; the last shriek had not been so near ; the furious beast had attacked the first person it came upon ; and who could that be ? Since he was a boy Kallem had not run so fast ; he could hear by the dog that there was a fight and he pushed on with renewed strength. Soon he saw something large and black by the roadside near the corner of the wood, and it was before this that the dog had stopped. Once again a piercing shriek rang out through the night ; it really came from there ! What was that great black mass ? Surely not an animal ?

No, it was a man, a big man fighting with a smaller one, and a dog with both of them. The big man kept turning round and hitting out at the dog, at the same time keeping fast hold of the other man with his left hand. Then Kallem recognised the broad hat and the broad shoulders ; it was Tuft who was holding Aune, holding him with a giant's strength ; the dog was trying to attack the latter, who kicked it away from him each time. Maybe Aune thought the dog was the devil and possessed by Kristen Larssen's spirit, for the man kicked and wriggled, bit, hit out, and struggled to get free ; he threw himself backwards and with the last remains of his hoarse voice he groaned, " Help ! " " Help ! " If he had been frightened before, he became so now in good earnest as he saw Kallem's figure appear in the dim light ; he let himself fall and began to howl.

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The dog flew at his leg directly. The minister lifted them both up; the beast was in such a rage that it did not see Kallem before it got a kick from his foot which sent it flying a few metres off! One short howl and a whine—a doctor knows where to hit—and they neither saw nor heard it again; it may have been dead.

Then Kallem took hold of Aune and the minister let him go. He, too, had been much maltreated; his coat was all torn and dragging on the ground, the sleeve hung in rags down over his hand, his flannel shirt likewise. He was bleeding from bites and scratches, but 'was so excited that he felt no pain. Kallem took little wretched Aune with both hands by the collar, lifted him up to his level, and, panting from his run and the rapid coursing of his blood, he stared straight into his eyes, until they grew wide open, dazed, and glassy, his mouth gaped, the muscles of the face relaxed, he hung there like a gutted herring. By the time that Sissel reached them breathless and crying, Aune lay under the trees on the grass and slept. Both the men stood over him.

Kallem said that Aune could stay where he was; there would be no dew on account of the wind; they should be sent for later. He expected to be able to cure this madness.

The minister had taken off his coat, dried the blood, and bound up the worst places; then they turned towards home.

Not a word about Aune, or how it was he had come across him; but hardly were they out on the road before Tuft said piteously:

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"She was not there, Edward, she was not there!" And shortly after: "I can think of nothing else; no, now I can think of nothing else. That you could send her away from you, Edward!" The thick foliage of the trees took up the murmur and kept on unceasingly: "That you could send her away, Edward!"

"Do you know what she wrote and put beside the letters from you? 'For my life's sake I go now to my brother's.'"

Kallem felt an icy chill. A thousand voices re-echoed: "For my life's sake," and the sound drew nearer, encircling him closer and closer, till he could hardly draw breath.

The day was about to dawn; Tuft's scratched and shiny face was turned toward the rising sun as though he were imploring: "Mercy, mercy for her!" He hurried along as fast as he could; he did not know where to look for her, but he felt he must walk and walk. Kallem too.

"Oh, the horror of it, the horror of it!" he burst forth. "Do you remember the night of the storm in our childhood, Edward? We thought the world was at an end. Do you remember how frightened you were up on the hill the evening after? This whole night the 'deep-sea monsters' have been trying to reach me too. The horror of it! our soul's horror of the punishment of sins! From our childhood it drives away all our intelligence, just when we are most in need of it; we run away in despair—or cast ourselves down in the dust before God. Perchance later on we get rid of this dogma of

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terror, but never of its effects. As I was walking along thinking of this, I came across that madman. He leapt up; the terror was upon him; he thought I was a ghost and the dog the devil! And Josephine! She too is in despair and flees away. And you, Edward? You too must be swayed by terror if you can have the heart to torture her more than she now tortures herself. For that is the worst of terror, it hurts one; he who has been terrified himself, learns to terrify others!"

The words came from him heavily; his walk was heavy too as he plodded along. Kallem did not say a word; when he suffered he was silent.

But from a child the lay preacher's son had been accustomed to hear all life experiences converted into learning. His heart was bleeding; but he talked on all the time. Kallem ought not to doubt Josephine; she was the most honourable and truthful creature on the face of the earth. In this affair she had been led astray by him. In his deep pity for her, he laid bare her soul's history as he himself saw it, and proved to him clearly that if she were to be cast off now by her brother she could not live.

Occasionally Kallem interposed with a "Dear Ole," "Listen to me, Ole;" but never got any further. For even when they reached his home and he took his brother-in-law in with him to attend to his wounds, Tuft talked on without ceasing; it was as though his fear and uncertainty would have increased had he been silent; and then too Edward must see her as he saw her, and

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above all help her! "All who have gone astray must be helped; they who have sinned against us—as soon as they acknowledge it they must be helped above all others! God's forgiveness is, to help us on." He was still going on with his explanations as Kallem accompanied him to the door; his giant strength was unailing. But supposing that she meanwhile had gone back to her child and to him. Certainly there was no great hope of it; but he hurried away.

It grew lighter. Kallem could not sleep, and at last could not remain at home. In fear, greater than he would own to his brother-in-law, he went in and out of the rooms, up and down as though the house were to be searched. For it was true enough that he too had both judged and condemned.

His sister had always been fonder of him than he of her. That time they had danced together last winter he could tell that her love for him had not diminished. Yes, even when he struck her—had she not come then to do him good? Her attack on Ragni that time—of course there was more than dogmatical narrow-mindedness in it—it was jealousy! Jealousy because he had become all in all to Ragni and was nothing to her. He could have brought those two women together; it was impossible to doubt that. Had he tried to do that?

The more he thought of it, the less right he had to be severe: for he was guilty too! His sister's great eyes, as he had seen them last evening, were resting on him now in her direst need,

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they seemed to gaze full at him. All her life long, confused and shy, when not carried away by passion, hampered by unnatural doctrines and defiant in her truthfulness—she had looked out for him, from year to month from week to day. Then he came and had cast her off. Cast her off for one who was not worthy of him—so it seemed to her.

Poor, poor Josephine ! He had thus never been anything for her, had only harmed her, and yet she in her faithfulness had always longed for him.

The rooms became oppressive and he felt afraid ; he must go out and look for her. It was getting lighter and lighter and with the feeling that morning was near, he threw open the veranda doors ; but he had nothing to do out there ; on the contrary he would have to shut them again if he were really going out. So he stepped out to close them again and in doing so glanced on one side—and there, sheltered from the north wind by the veranda, sitting on Ragni's bench just under his office windows, was Josephine, with her shawl over her knees. She saw him and crouched down like a wounded bird, which cannot move away, yet must not be seen. And yet she was sitting there just to be seen. There was nowhere else she could be, for she had tried. He hurried down the steps toward her. Then she trembled :

"Oh, no, Edward, oh, no ; let me stay," she implored and burst into tears. And even when he took her by the arm and raised her up she kept on

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beseeking him, weak as any child: "Oh, no, no, Edward, let me——" but she got no further, for she felt herself folded in his arms, and felt how he too was quivering with the emotion he could not control. He was not cruel, perchance he would listen to her, and she raised her arms and threw them round him mingling her tears with his; the brother and sister stood with their heads together, cheek resting upon cheek, all the similarity of their temperament, their first and oldest feelings, their love of homelike things, down to the very smell of their clothes in the passages at their parent's house, all this met together in their one desire never again to part.

And yet, when he began to move with her toward the veranda, she stopped; she could not believe that she would be allowed to go in. She looked at him through her tears; he forced her along, step by step. On the steps she again held back. But he led her on till they stood in the room; here she clasped her arms round him again and sinking down upon a chair, buried her face in her hands—everything in the room, he too, seemed listening to her sobs.

Then he went up to her and stroked her hair; but he knew it was not really he who did it, it was Ragni!

Arm in arm they walked that summer's night through the town that was so wide-awake, although every one seemed asleep. The long steps of brother and sister hurried on, keeping time as of old; they said nothing about it, but they were looking for Ole; forgot the short cut and came

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down the road to the shore. Soon they turned up toward the minister's house. They had just gone a few steps along the road, when Josephine as it were felt drawn to look across the shore. She stopped directly and held back Edward.

"Yes, it is he!" she whispered.

Tuft came hurrying from out yonder, quickly, quickly, but with hanging head as though he could not bear it. In vain he had searched for her along the shore, he was now going on with his search further southward—quickly as ever, though ever in vain. They both understood, her arm trembled in that of her brother. She pressed closer up to him, for just a moment ago she had told him that had she been driven out of his garden, then—! Hush! They turned now and went to meet Ole. His quick ear heard the steps, he looked up, recognised her, opened his arms and could neither go a step further nor utter a sound. But Josephine left her brother's arm and went to him.

All three walked slowly homewards, the minister with Josephine on his arm and Kalle at his other side. He said repeatedly: "God's ways! God's ways!"

"But I do not share your faith," Kalle felt bound to interpose.

"No, no, no, no," exclaimed the minister eagerly. "There where good people walk, those are God's ways."

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